# The Voice-in-the-Desert

Pauline Bradford Mackie

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# THE VOICE IN THE DESERT

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PAULINE BRADFORD MACKIE

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# THE VOICE IN THE DESERT

By PAULINE BRADFORD MACKIE

[*Mrs. Herbert Muller Hopkins*]

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TO HERBERT, IN
MEMORY OF OUR
DAYS ON THE DESERT

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THE VOICE IN THE DESERT

## CHAPTER I

IT was twilight on the desert. The mountains which had crouched dull and vague at noon gained in magnificence and height as the shadows deepened. Great clefts and towering edges appeared, purple in the depths, rose on the peaks. The desert stretched away level to the horizon and there caught some reflection of the glowing west. It was like a strange lifeless sea on which the light lay, but did not penetrate. The sky at the zenith was still bright blue, but it no longer looked hot. Coolness had come with the setting of the sun. The desert air, wonderful, dry, life-giving, swayed the palms and pepper trees that bordered the plaza of the little town of Sahuaro; it stirred the road into miniature sand-whirls and blew soft into the faces of the people who were waiting for the train. The depot, set in the centre of the plaza, looked like an old Louisiana home. The second story was used as an hotel, and had a balcony very gay with flower-boxes.

Twice a day the great Overland swept by the town, stopping only long enough to afford its passengers breakfast and supper.

A short time before the train was due there came down the road a pretty and charming woman between

two boys. She held a hand of each and listened with a smile to what the older boy was saying. All three were bare-headed. The boys' blond hair was bleached to tow-colour, and already at their blue eyes showed the crow's-feet that comes from living in a land of sunshine.

Haydon, the station-master, gave the lady his comfortable armchair when she came up on the platform. He was a Southerner, and his traditional hospitality of nature made him feel himself the host of these occasions.

"Reckon you're later than common this evening, Mis' Lispenard," he remarked.

She acknowledged his greeting with a smile as she sank into the chair. "Run along and play, chicks," she told the children. She gave the youngest a gentle push. "Go along with Jim, Tiggy. Mamma doesn't want you hanging on her all the time."

The station-master lingered, looking out to the desert as a captain looks to sea. "Mighty calm for this season of the year," he said, "not much wind." He moved away, a lank figure of a man, fine-featured but not forceful, a kind of gentleman gone to seed, most at ease in the society of boys and his inferiors in birth.

It was the friendly hour of day in Sahuaro, and, left alone, Mrs. Lispenard gave herself up to its enjoyment. The very greenness of the plaza had a spir-

itual effect upon her; she liked the stir of life that the strolling people gave; the tinkle of a Mexican's mandolin; the pink afterglow of the sky seen through the spiked leaves of the bordering palms; the glimpse of blanketed Indians outside with baskets and pottery to sell to the incoming passengers. She nodded an amused good-evening to the telegraph operator, who leant out of his window talking to his girl, and smiled at a young ranchman and his wife who had a pail of new milk for sale at five cents a dipperful. Their baby was in its buggy. They were parishioners of her husband's, and she had been the baby's godmother when it was baptised. Near them was the old Mexican woman with her basket of hot tamales. Now and then she clucked to the baby and dangled her rosary in its face. The steam came through the white cotton cloth laid neatly over the tamales.

Two cowboys clattered down the stairs from the hotel dining room, and taking chairs at a respectful distance from Mrs. Lispenard tilted them back against the wall and lit long black cigars.

Thus she continued to sit aloof, although knowing herself to be most welcome, reserved, yet conscious that her personality expressed a gracious, feminine desire to please. Her brown hair was brought up high on her head in a loose twist; her skin was not as fair as it should be for her eyes, but she had a rich and glowing colour and a handsome throat left bare by a black

lace scarf crossed like a kerchief over her breast and fastened with a crimson rose. Her calico dress, made in a fashion of several years ago and received in a missionary-box, was freshly laundered and faded to a lavender. She kept her feet drawn in beneath the flounce. Her shoes were not only cracked, but the leather was worn to a distasteful brown.

The great Overland came rushing into the little station like a black monster, puffing and steaming, its red eye blazing. Far more congruous with the landscape would have been a caravan of camels approaching from out the mysterious East. Where all had been a leisurely expectancy now all was bustle and confusion. The supper-bell rung from the balcony above rose superior to all other sounds. The passengers came hurrying out; those who had dined on the train to stroll about the plaza for fresh air and to bargain with the Indians. But the majority were frankly concerned over something to eat, and those who did not go upstairs took draughts of the new milk and bought tamales of the old woman, who sold them six for a quarter. The big engine was uncoupled and driven up to the red-painted water-tank to have its boiler filled.

Mrs. Lispenard had drawn her chair back and sat unnoticed. She watched the different faces eagerly. The Pullman conductor took off his cap to her as he hurried down from supper.

All too soon the excitement of the day was past, and the Overland swept on from out the warmly pulsating little town into the desolate waste of sand, of cacti, of barren mountain.

The afterglow had gone from the sky and the mountain peaks, and wildness encroached upon the green little plaza. A note of dreariness was creeping into the landscape. It seemed to find some faint reflection in the lady's face. She sighed and brushed back a straying curl of her soft hair. For fifteen years she had watched the train come and go, and never once had she welcomed a friend. How many more times was she doomed to feel afresh that sting of humiliation and disappointment, the rebuff Fate dealt her romantic imaginings? She was mortified at her own weakness in coming. The platform was now deserted save for herself. The boys had gone to the drug-store, which was the post-office as well. It would be nearly an hour before the distribution of the mail was finished.

While she waited the moon rose, the orange moon of the desert, gibbous-shaped at the horizon. It sent a broad pathway of light across the sands and put a silver sheen on the foothills. The note of dreariness which had slipped into the landscape vanished. The hour she sat there seemed neither long nor short to her. Patience had ceased to be a virtue. The lack of any need for haste in her life destroyed that.

The boys came back finally with the mail. There was only a circular for their father.

"Just one man got off the train to-night," Jim informed her. "Haydon says he's taken a room and he bets he's an Easterner come out to look after some mines. Anyway, he isn't an invalid."

"Well, I'm glad for that," she answered.

The three started slowly homeward. The boys had learned to recognise an inevitable change of mood in their mother. She always started out like a girl to a party and returned home with them quiet and depressed.

The increasing brilliancy of the rising moon seemed to show the air still full of the sunset colours. She could see the roofs of the adobe houses which, low as they were, yet showed above the shrub-like trees. She saw the pathetic spire of her husband's church, pathetic, because it was no more effective in the landscape than a splintered spar tossing at sea.

Tiggy's feet lagged.

"Let mother carry you, precious," said Mrs. Lispenard. She lifted him up in her arms. She was very strong and she carried him lightly. Her pretty vanity of appearance was gone, and she stepped along firmly in her rusty, run-over shoes.

Tiggy's thin fingers thrust themselves under the lace fichu and slipped around until his arm fastened firmly about her neck. Then with his head on her shoulder

he lay staring across at the moon. His resemblance to his father had never been more apparent to her.

"Shut your eyes, Tiggy," she said. "Haven't I told you that little boys shouldn't look too much at the moon? It makes them luny."

Jim gave an exuberant shout. "Luny Tiggy!" he cried. He had his mother's love of fun, and welcomed eagerly the least approach to a jest.

Someone was coming up the sidewalk back of them.

"Want to know who that is?" said Jim. "I can tell you. It's the man who stayed over here. I know because he steps so quick. Us Sahuaro people take it more easy."

"You know an awful lot, don't you?" said Tiggy calmly.

"Where did you learn to be so observing, Jim, dear?" asked his mother.

"Oh, I learned all right," he answered mysteriously. "I can walk along the streets with my eyes closed and tell just who it is passes me. Cozzens says he can tell an enemy coming up behind and can draw a bead on him without even looking back over his shoulder."

"If you call Mr. Cozzens, Cozzens again, I shall punish you," said his mother.

Jim frowned and kicked at a tuft of the coarse grass growing up between the planks of the side-

walk. He felt he was too old to be reproved by his mother as though he were Tiggy.

"I suppose the stranger's come out to see the sights of this wonderful town as well as his mining property," she said, teasing him.

She glanced back over her shoulder. Of whom did the man approaching remind her? What could there be familiar to her in the tall figure? Yet she felt her heart beating fast.

"I don't care what you say," Jim was saying, loyal to his birthplace, which he had never yet left. "I like Sahuaro better than any other town in the world."

She flung back her head and laughed, her pretty teasing laugh. She could coquet with Jim in lieu of anyone else, but now her laughter was intended for the ears of the approaching stranger.

About to pass, he turned, startled, and looked at her. Their eyes met. Her laughter died on her lips. They stood staring in amazement at each other, and the little lads, reflecting their mother's surprise, were silent, too. Tiggy raised himself in her arms, half-smiling, but Jim was a trifle aggressive. Mrs. Lispenard was first to break the silence, and her voice shook. "Why, Jarvey," she cried; "why, Jarvis Trent." Her eyes shone with eager desire to be remembered. "Don't you remember me?" they queried mutely, "me, Adele?"

"Adele," he said at last, hesitatingly.

"Yes," she answered, almost with a sob, so great was her relief. There had been a moment of tragic suspense when she feared he would not know her. And if Jarvis Trent did not recognise her the desert must, indeed, have robbed her of all her old charm and beauty!

"You were the last person in the world I expected to see here," he said slowly, "although I knew you went West when you married, and Lispenard wrote once or twice and then dropped the correspondence. You are not changed."

"But you are, Jarvey," she said soberly; "I can see even now you are different. Do you believe in premonitions? I must have felt it was you. I could not have known just by your figure and walk, could I? You never heard from us because we got lost in the desert. We have been fifteen years in this forlorn town. Think of it."

"Sahuaro has doubled in population in the last ten years," put in Jim.

"Jim and I love Sahuaro," added Tiggy.

"Poor babies, you see how provincial they are," she said, smiling. "How glad Theodore will be to see you. And I was deploring that I had no letter for him! We live right on this street. Jim, dear, this is father's friend, Mr. Trent."

"Well, I'm taken back, you bet," said Jim.

"There Haydon and I were speculating on what you might be, and concluded you were a mine owner."

"I'm not as important as that, Jim," Trent answered, shaking hands with the boy "He looks like your family, your father, I think," he added to Mrs. Lispenard.

She was pleased. "I think so," she assented.

"Let me carry the little fellow for you," he said.

She relinquished Tiggy with a sigh of relief. She was not in the least tired, but it suited her to be feminine and appealing.

"What's the reason you can't walk, young man?" asked Trent, looking down upon the boy transferred to his arms.

Tiggy put up his hand and drew it gently down the cheek of this new friend. "Mamma likes to carry me," he answered.

"She does, does she?" Trent rejoined. "Well, you just trot on ahead there with your brother." He put the child down on his feet. "I might know how you would be with your children, Adele," he added, looking at her affectionately; "slap them one minute and spoil them the next, as you did your lovers."

"Was I as bad as that?" she answered.

The two boys went on ahead.

She put a detaining hand on his arm. "Think of it, Jarvey," she cried; "yours is the first face of an old friend I've seen in fifteen years. The first face

from home in fifteen years! Don't you notice the smell of the desert? It has been in my nostrils all this time. It is in my hair, in my clothes, in my handkerchief even." She waved it as she spoke to the two little lads, who were looking back. "Run on, chicks; mother's coming. Don't tell father there is anyone with us. We'll surprise him."

"Is this Lispenard's church we are passing?" asked Trent. He was distressed by her tears, and for her sake wished to change the subject. Fifteen years in the desert! All those years without seeing a face from home! And yet he thought with some sadness that he had never considered the city he lived in his home in the sense it once was before she married and went away.

"Oh, no," she answered; "Theodore's is only a little chapel. This is one of the landmarks of a past civilisation. It is an old Roman Catholic mission. See how broken it is." She stopped to point out to him the frail balconies distinct in the moonlight. "The old floor is quite gone, but there are still some wonderful paintings on the wall, and in the tower are the bronze bells which still hold their sweet tones."

He was looking down at her in an abstracted way, almost as if he did not see her.

"It is a quaint and melancholy place," she said, as they went on. "We must show it to you in the daytime. Here is where we live, right next to it."

She opened the gate of a low adobe house set well back from the street in the shadow of the old mission.

" I don't notice any smell of the desert," Trent said, " unless it's this heavy fragrance."

" You never had any imagination, Jarvey," she retorted. " You have to have something as powerful as the magnolia. But I'll forgive you anything, even your lack of sympathy. I'm so glad to see you. And how delighted Theodore will be."

" Hurry up," cried Jim, " we can't wait forever. I'm going to open the door now." He burst in with a whoop, Tiggy a close second, and Trent, as much touched as he was amused and embarrassed, followed Mrs. Lispenard into the house.

## CHAPTER II

LISPENARD was unchanged; Trent saw that at once. It was the same youthful, almost boyish figure that rose from behind the table and came forward, the blond hair slightly rumpled as of old, the remembered smile touched now by puzzlement. The distancing fifteen years, the hurt that he had let their correspondence languish, ceased to exist, and Trent felt his heart leap as it had when he met Adele.

"He doesn't know who it is," she cried. "Why, Theodore, where are your eyes? It's Jarvis Trent."

"Dear old fellow," cried Lispenard, shaking him by both hands, "can you ever forgive me? I never was more surprised in my life."

"Nor I," answered his friend; "I remembered your wife's laugh."

She laughed again and blushed, standing with an arm about each of her boys.

"I believe you've grown younger," Trent continued, laying his hand on his friend's shoulder, "and I can't yet realise the fact that these two splendid boys are yours."

"Come and sit down by the fire," Mrs. Lispenard said, pushing up a big chair. "Now, chicks, mother

will give you just five minutes to get into bed. You can say good-night to-morrow morning. Excuse me a minute, won't you, Jarvey? I'm going out to get you something to eat."

"Thank you," he answered, "I had supper at the depot. I don't know that I ever saw a place before which combined both station and hotel. I've taken a room there."

"You'll enjoy Haydon," said Lispenard; "he's what might be called a motherly soul. Well, if you're not hungry we must have a little wine for the stomach's sake, anyway."

"I'm not sure that I want to get very near the fire," Trent said, taking the chair Mrs. Lispenard had dragged forward for him. "It seems warm to me."

"I know, but you'd find it chilly without a fire in these adobe houses. Still, my lamp often gives heat enough, but we think a fire is cheerful," his host rejoined. "Will you try a pipe?" He stood drawing a cleaner through the stem of the pipe he was about to offer him. The lamp-light shone on his scholarly white hands and his worn gray study-coat. "I shall never forget when we were first married that Mrs. Lispenard undertook to scrub my pipes in soap and water. I don't believe she got the nicotine off her fingers for weeks, and I am sure she's never forgiven me."

Trent laughed. "To think of my dropping down

upon you like this. I never heard of such luck." He moved his chair a little further from the fire and set rocking a low chair near by. A gold thimble rolled to the floor from out the sewing-basket which had been left in the seat. He stooped and picked it up. What was the vague association it awakened in him? He turned it over in his palm and read the initials and the date. He had once given it to Adele. Suddenly he looked up and met the gaze of a stranger across the room. He was amazed that he had not seen it before—that young face, oval in shape and pale, the hair almost like an aureole, beyond the green globe of the lamp. His own eyes encountered briefly a watchful regard. Had he seen only the face he might even have taken it to be that of a youth—one's ideal poet or painter in his early promise.

Lispenard looked up puzzled, divining the changed atmosphere, noting Trent's surprise. He followed his gaze across the room, and his own face flushed.

"Can you ever forgive me, Miss Armes?" he cried. "I was so carried away with seeing my friend that I forgot my manners."

Trent thought her extremely gentle and sweet as she shook hands with him. Her white dress, with its elbow sleeves, was very youthful, its sole ornament being a heavy gold army buckle at her waist; and he noticed an officer's cape flung carelessly on the lounge where she had been sitting. "I was only wishing I

might slip out of the room without being seen," she told him. "Such an old friend made me feel *de trop*. You see, I placed you at once when I heard your name. Out here in the desert we even learn to know our friends' friends."

He turned from her to look affectionately at Lispenard. "Then you sometimes thought of me even if you never wrote, old fellow."

"I'll explain why I never wrote," he answered. "Firstly," counting off on his fingers, "I believe in the immortality of the soul; secondly, in that celestial life we shall have ample time for converse with those friends whose paths here diverged from ours; thirdly, that this fine provision being thus made we should not neglect those present by sending wistful outpourings on paper to the absent."

"That's the most cold-blooded excuse I ever heard," Trent retorted; "it's barely decent, but I forgive you." He replaced the thimble in the dainty basket which was heaped with some white fabric in which the needle glanced. It was so characteristic of Adele. The buoyancy of his mood was gone. The reading of their joined initials on the little thimble induced a wistful strain, and the chilling impression of having discovered a stranger in the room in which he had supposed himself alone with Lispenard lingered.

He was conscious, as in their student days, that Lispenard was still talking.

"I tell you what it is, Trent," with an airy wave of the pipe, "the desert imposes no limit to the imagination, and so we simply carry our neglected correspondence over into the next world."

Trent answered with a slight smile. The reaction of his mood made him physically depressed, and he felt the strain of his journey for the first time.

Mrs. Lispenard came in from the dining room carrying a tray. The excitement rendered her more charming than ever. The rose at her breast had slipped its fastenings, and so she had thrust it carelessly into her hair; she had put on a ruffled white apron, which gave the final touch of coquettishness to her appearance. Trent regarded her appreciatively; love of life was strong in Adele.

"I didn't see you, Yucca," she cried. "When did you come in?"

"I have been here some time," Miss Armes answered, piling up the magazines and papers as she spoke. "Shan't I clear a space for you on the table?"

"Yes, thank you." She stood holding the tray. "Theodore, get another glass and plate from the dining room, dear. Boys, I'm ashamed of you. Aren't you in bed yet?"

A giggle was the only answer. She looked at Trent, and laughed. "You see that like most mothers I have eyes in the back of my head. I know when they're up to mischief."

"I don't suppose they want to go to bed at a proper hour any more than we do," she continued, putting down the tray. "Nothing ever irritates me more than when at the end of a stupid evening all that remains is to go to bed. It's the last straw." She set the dish of fruit from out the laden tray on the table, rearranging it a little, so that the green of the grapes and the orange-red of the pomegranates should contrast well with the purple figs. "Please tell me that you never ate ripe figs, for I want you to appreciate these to the full. They are delicious."

"Never," he answered. "I remember that when Lispenard and I went abroad that summer we had a chance to buy some ripe figs. But they were out of season and expensive, so we gave them up. Those were our student days, Miss Armes, when we were poor. We went steerage."

"Were!" echoed Lispenard, coming back with the plate and glass. "Are you become a Philistine and given over to the getting of riches? Where are your treasures in heaven? I begin to perceive a certain fatness in you. Ah, I must look after the state of your soul. I shall write you such a sermon on the delights of poverty that when you hear it you will throw riches to the dogs!

"'Art thou poor, yet hast thou golden slumbers?
Oh, sweet content!'

"You remember that old poem, Jarvey?

" ' Dost thou laugh to see how fools are vexed
To add to golden numbers, golden numbers? '

The riches of poverty! Being poor, it is possible for me to be content, for to be content is to have desires which can be satisfied. Who was that delightful Frenchman who said he had obtained happiness by the moderation of his desires? I wish a certain book, and Fortune often favours me with an excellent review of it in my newspaper. It is tantalising, but stimulating to the imagination. I am actually tempted to go ahead and try to write such a book myself for the pleasure of possessing it. On Easter my dear wife gets me a new tie to go with my old suit, and I am puffed up with vanity. And Sundays we have chicken. If we had it every day, Jim and Tiggy would become satiated and cease to quarrel over the wishbone. Come to dinner Sunday, and you shall have——"

"Theodore," his wife interrupted, joining in the laughter, but impatient, "aren't you ever going to open that claret?"

"The wishbone!" he ended triumphantly, holding the bottle between his knees as he drew out the cork. "I was reading the last chapter of my book aloud when you two came in, and Miss Armes didn't like it. You'll have to be victimised, Trent. I want a man's judgment. Like the ancient mariner, I must tell my tale. It's a philosophy." He filled up their glasses and raised his own. "Your health, old man!"

"I liked it," Miss Armes protested, "but not for the last chapter. It hadn't an air of finality. It was more like the beginning of another book than the ending of a completed one."

"That is the way of all intellectual life," he retorted. "One philosophy opens into another. It all dovetails, so to speak."

"I side with Miss Armes," Trent said. "A book should be a work of art, well rounded out, leaving the reader satisfied by a sense of completion."

"You barely escaped being a pedant when you were young, and now there's danger of your becoming too judicial," said Lispenard. "I declare you have the proportion of a judge, but don't tell me I look like a minister. I don't wish to be marked as the professional good man."

His wife was making two sandwiches of crackers spread with orange marmalade. She gave Trent a glance of mingled humour and resentment. "Ever since my marriage I've had my nose in a pot of jam in the desert!" She took the crackers in to the boys, whose room opened out of the main one. There was a whispered consultation, from which she returned smiling, putting back a lock of hair which had been disturbed by Tiggy's ardent hug. "They've promised to be good and stay quietly in bed, if I'll only leave the door open. I'm afraid I spoil them, but after all your coming is almost as much of an event to the children

as to us. They are planning great things for your entertainment. Don't you like the figs? "

"I'm afraid Mr. Trent isn't eating them in the right way," put in Miss Armes. She leant forward. "May I show you? " she asked, taking his fruit knife. "You must take off this thin outside skin, or it will pucker your mouth. See, like this. Now try it."

He finished peeling it and ate it obediently, but when Adele would have urged more of the figs upon him he refused. "I think they're insipid."

"They're delicious," she insisted. "I shall have them for breakfast to-morrow morning, with cream and brown bread and coffee. You learn to like them, as you do olives, I think."

Lispenard heaped more wood on the fire. The large room, with its walls of adobe painted a delicate apricot tint, no longer seemed too warm to Trent.

"This is our library and parlour and Theodore's study, too," Adele said. "We have a real old mission fireplace, you see, which I bought out of a Spanish home here in town. Jim and I made the chairs to go with it ourselves, although the chair you're in is a genuine antique. I will tell you a secret, but you must never, never tell. Theodore's writing-desk is one of the side-altar tables from the old mission of Santa Ines next to us. It's so littered over now that you can't see the magnificent grain of the wood."

"If it were from one of our churches I might con-

sider it put to profane use, but as it is we hold it a brand snatched from the burning," remarked Lispenard. "It is a fascinating place, this Santa Ines in whose shadow we live. You could have no better guides than the two boys. It has been their play-house. Can you imagine greater riches? My sons are princes! It is roofed with numerous domes and half-domes of the Venetian-Byzantine school, and there is still some half-obliterated frescoing of angels and evangelists. And how you will enjoy the painting above the main altar! It looks like an old man with red, puffed-out cheeks, blowing a column of smoke, but it's really supposed to be God sending down the breath of life."

"I am trying to persuade the town to buy it," said Miss Armes. "The Roman Catholics still own it, although they have long since abandoned it, because it is so old. They have another church here, in the Indian village, and the old priest, through long association, is as much of an Indian as any of his followers. You will find that Sahuaro is still largely Mexican and Spanish in its traditions, Mr. Trent. I hope it may continue so. The very thought of hideous modern buildings going up here distresses me."

Intensely interested himself in the beautifying of his own city, he was struck by her public spirit. He thought her interest in architecture unusual in a woman. As he looked at her he saw that she was

older than he first thought. Her face had more colour now than when he saw its pale oval beyond the green globe of the lamp. Her eyes had lost their shadowed look and were brighter, yet he was glad when she finally rose to go, for he could not shake off the chill impression made upon him when he had looked up and met her close regard across the room. Her extreme gentleness and sweetness of manner showed to him only that she was a very well-bred woman. He felt himself too keen a judge of humanity to mistake them for qualities of the heart. And he distrusted a watchful person. She drew about her the old army-cape which had been lying on the sofa and turned to say good-night to him.

Her hand rested lightly a moment in his. "I hope you are going to stay some time. You must all come over to see me."

"Thank you," he answered. "I shan't commit myself by telling how long I intended to stay, now that I have found my friends. They might get tired of me and try to make me hold to my original plan if they knew."

Lispenard stood, hat in hand, to escort her home. "I will be back in a minute," he said.

"What did I hear you call her?" Trent asked his hostess when they were alone.

"Yucca. Isn't it a horrid name?" she commented frankly. "Her father was stationed out in Arizona

when she was born, and he named her after a tree which grows about here. Did you think she was pretty? "

"Why, no," he said. "Do you? I thought her rather poetical-looking, but colourless."

She gave him a strange look, which he could not fathom. "Oh! you will think her beautiful if you stay here long enough." She drew her low rocking-chair closer to the fire, and sat staring into it, her chin on her hand.

They were silent, like old friends, he thinking over the strangeness of their meeting in such a place after so many years. In the adjoining room slept her two children—Adele's children! He turned his head a moment to look at her. Life had never seemed more mysterious to him than at this moment. The little gold thimble he had once given her, with their initials entwined and the date on it, glinted on top of the sewing in her work-basket. And Lispenard! How unchanged he was! He did not even now quite seem her husband, nor the father of the boys. He had none of the air of a family man. He retained his old bearing of personal freedom, the spiritual poise of a man who, staff in hand, is free to start at a moment's notice.

The wood burned low in the old mission fireplace. He noticed the iron hinges to the cupboard which was built in at one side. Behind the small diamond-shaped panes of thick glass he saw dimly several rows of small

volumes, the treasures of a bookman. He wondered if the two heavy brass candlesticks also came from the mission of Santa Ines. They had an appearance of great age. It was such a fireplace as this that he would have dreamed of for a home of his own. A bachelor's home! The thought was dreary. Above the mantel hung the picture of the Two Princes in the Tower. The blond hair of the little lads reminded him of Jim and Tiggy.

He sat content in that pleasant room, steeped in such an atmosphere of home as he had seldom known, wrapped in a melancholy which was not all sadness.

Now that the excitement of their meeting had worn off, she had an opportunity to observe him closely. Yes, he was changed. It seemed to her at times that her husband had not altered since their marriage. He was touched by immortal youth. But Trent's dark hair was already sprinkled with grey, and his face had learned sternness. She saw that he had been successful, and knew that character had wrought for that success rather than brilliancy of gifts. Even his emotions came hard with him. Mingled with his tenacious power was a deep vein of shyness. With an eye which never failed to notice worldly appearance, she perceived now how well he was dressed, and she looked away from him, the sudden colour burning her cheeks. She had remembered the rusty, worn shoes drawn beneath her skirt. She wished he had not come,

but her warm heart repented the wish almost as soon as it was made, so that she turned back to him with a smile, the flush of mortification fading away beneath the gentler emotion of hospitality which succeeded her anger.

"You look like a judge, Jarvey," she told him. "Somehow, you remind me of my father."

"Do I?" he answered. "Perhaps the same profession sets its stamp on men." He continued to regard her with an abstracted look, the look of a man so intent in thought upon a woman as to render him barely conscious of her personal nearness.

She looked away. A dimple came and went in the rounded cheek nearest him.

"I admired your father," he said simply. "I studied law in his office. That was when I met you. There is a steel engraving of him hanging above my desk now, and I have his old office furniture. I had to have the chair mended with steel rods."

Lispenard came in gaily. "I want you to come out with me. It's a wonderful night. My dear, are you crying?"

"No, no," she answered, rising. She wiped away her tears bewitchingly, smiling at them both. "Only we were speaking of my father, and it made me homesick. I can't realise he isn't still living."

"She's all unstrung over your coming," said Lispenard; "it's so long since she's seen an old friend."

"Yes, yes; that's it," she assented hastily. Not for worlds would she have them divine her consciousness of her shabby shoes. She was so nervous that she felt the least kindly question would draw the absurd truth from her. "Jarvey, remember that we expect you to breakfast. I wish I might ask you to remain all night, but the only bed I could offer you would be the lounge in this room."

She met her husband's glance. "I am hurt that you didn't invite me to go with you on your moonlight walk," she said, pouting.

He laughed outright, and Trent joined in. How well he remembered Adele's old pretence of being offended over some mere trifle!

She followed them out on the porch. "Good-night," she called after them; "good-night, Jarvey!"

He turned to close the gate, and saw her wave her handkerchief, that bit of sheer linen with its faint perfume which she had insisted had the very smell of the desert in it. Her mood was changed to coquetry, but the little handkerchief she waved so gaily must still be damp with her tears.

"She makes me feel like a boy again," he said, as he put on his hat and fell into step with his friend.

"She keeps me a boy," Lispenard answered.

## CHAPTER III

HE glanced at Trent as he spoke, with that ready smile which the other remembered so well. Unlike most people who smile often, this frequency of expression in him gave always the impression of singular rarity and a kind of meaning sweetness. His light-grey cowboy's hat shadowed his face, yet his features, owing to the clearness of the air, were distinct.

"You know what the painters say about us; that we have no atmosphere," he said. He called his friend's attention to a pink rose which clambered about the doorway of the Santa Ines Mission. "Did you ever know moonlight to show colour like that before?"

"No," answered Trent, adding abruptly: "That youngest boy is you over again."

"My dear fellow," he protested, "don't say that. It robs Tiggy and me both of our individuality. They say a man is made over every seven years, and I've been made over five times and more. I'm in the sixth process now. And if so many times physically, how many times spiritually?"

"I'm less than a year older than you," answered Trent, "and yet you look ten years younger than I."

His meeting with Lispenard had stirred him deeply.

It was the domestic life which kept men young, and he felt a pained conviction that should he marry now, his friend would still have the advantage of him in longer years with his children.

His companion was silent. Trent was touched by the spirituality of his look. "No one deserves happiness better than you," he said.

"Happiness!" retorted Lispenard, with delicate derision; "happiness is a condition like being well-fed and sleeping of nights. I hope I merit deeper experience. Now, Tiggy is happy."

"Where is your church?" Trent asked. "I'd like to see it."

They turned the corner. "I can point it out to you from here," he answered. "It is that little building at the end of the street."

Trent was puzzled that he paused so far away. He wished to go nearer, to read the corner-stone, perhaps, seeing that the moonlight was so bright, to go inside.

But Lispenard, after waiting courteously a moment, turned away indifferently.

"It looks small to you," he said; "but it holds my congregation. It is really quite elaborate in its furnishings, that is, for a mission church. You didn't know me when I passed through my fever of ritualism? I was lost. Ridiculous! Oh, I wish you could have seen me! You would have enjoyed it so! My performances hypnotised the women of my congrega-

tion. Even Adele bobbed and crossed and bent the knee! Our religion was obscured by the tinsel of symbolism. And I assure you, Trent, it's the one part of my life which fills me with keen mortification. You know they say we can never forgive a person who knows something ridiculous about us, and I have actually wished that some of the fools in my congregation could drop into their graves. Some of them still speak sentimentally to me of the time when there was so much spirituality among us, and deplore the coldness of our present service. Well, what do you suppose saved me? I must tell you. One of my most ardent supporters wished to put in a memorial window to her son. I drew the design myself and sent it East. It was a lamb, holding the cross. The window was to be round, and placed directly over the altar. After months of anticipation, it came, and was set up. The light fell through. I was all in a state of anticipatory beatitude. The lamb was grey. Imagine my feelings! There I had pictured it snowy-white. As far as my sensations were concerned, it might have been the black sheep, for it was only a few shades lighter. I didn't preach the sermon I had intended to that Sunday. I took the golden calf of the Hebrews instead as my text."

Trent laughed. He had an absurd picture in his mind of his friend dressed in all the paraphernalia of a ritualism with which he himself had not the slight-

est sympathy. He was a sceptic, although his mother, a Scotchwoman, had been a blue Presbyterian. She had reared him to all those tenets of morality her code taught, but she had done nothing to endear his church to him, and so, though he still abided by those principles of living, he was emotionally cold toward religion.

"The only question that really interests me in these matters," he remarked, "is whether or not I shall be eligible to the society of my friends after we have departed this world."

They walked on silently. Trent tried to imagine that handful of people which made up Lispenard's congregation, drawn together by the utter loneliness of the desert in which they lived, and harking back to the primitive experiences of mankind, going through their religious rites as passionately as the sun-worshippers whose ancient civilisation had passed away long since.

But what moonlight! The world seemed flooded with it. Never had he known such reaches of blue-silver light.

"I should think you might become moon-worshippers," he said.

"I understand that class to be confined generally in the asylums," Lispenard answered. He put his arm affectionately through his friend's. "I can't express the half of my joy in having you. Would you rather keep on walking, or do you want to go and sit down

somewhere and talk, and have something to eat? Don't tell me Mrs. Lispenard's crackers and marmalade were sufficient for you. You see, I remember your appetite of old."

"To be frank," Trent confessed, "I didn't think much of the lunch-counter at the depot."

"No one's supposed to take his meals there," Lispenard informed him, "except the train passengers. Campi's is the place to go."

They turned into the main street. It was but a few blocks in length, and built up on one side only. The little town of adobe homes and low-nestling trees through which they had been strolling became remote in contrast to the palpitant gaiety of this scene.

"It is always a mystery to me where this class comes from here in Sahuaro," said Lispenard. "During the day I seem to see only the shop-keepers, some of my parishioners, the Indians, the Roman Catholic priest, but the night brings strange birds. Lord knows where they come from. Many are in from the mines to spend their earnings, and the professional gambler is always among us, of course. I suppose it is the infusion of Spaniards and Mexicans which intensifies this sense of reckless adventure in the air."

Music floated out from behind the screens of saloons. The two cowboys whom Trent had happened to notice when he first entered the depot stood now in a shooting-gallery, aiming at the leaping white rabbit and

hounds which revolved continuously; the proprietor of an open cigar-stand was throwing dice with his customers; through the laundry window a Chinaman was to be seen ironing shirts and collars.

It seemed like the exposed street of a seaport town.

"I can't help feeling that I am in a fishing-village on a Saturday night, and that this breeze is whipping in from the ocean," said Trent.

"One immensity reminds us of another, but such a dry, sweet breeze never blew out of the ocean. It takes the desert to give us that." Lispenard paused as he spoke. "This is Campi's."

Trent read the name painted across the large front window of the one-storied frame building. Within were displayed bottles of wine, cooked viands, fruits, and fresh green lettuce. The double screen door carried him back to his childhood. A tropical scene was painted on one half and an Icelandic view on the other. The room was fairly well filled as they entered and took seats in the least-occupied corner and ordered sandwiches and beer.

Trent noticed that his companion did not touch the food and drank but a slight portion of the beer. The man was very delicate. "Do you enjoy the life here, Theodore?" he asked him.

"I'm not much needed," he answered, "except as a kind of parish nurse, to marry and baptise and bury people. These Westerners are fine and free. They

have their own code of morality. I should do more good in the big cities."

"Then why don't you go there?" Trent cried impulsively, "and let the world hear from you?" He leant across the table eagerly. He had thought that his affection for his friend had long since faded into mere sentiment over their diverging ways. But this unexpected meeting had shown the old love and congeniality strong as ever. Now, as he awaited a reply to his appeal, he had an instant's contemplation of the delightful companionship in store for them both should Lispenard go East.

"Perhaps I shall," he answered, smiling at his friend's enthusiasm.

The answer was disingenuous. Trent drew back chilled. The tone was evasive, and there was an expression in his friend's blue eyes which he read instantly. It was the look of a man inviolably wedded to a secret passion. His impulse of coldness was succeeded by pity. What poison had found its way into the man's heart? His wife and two children should have kept him sweet and whole. His heart yearned toward his friend.

And as if he felt this softened mood toward him, not at all understanding the cause, Lispenard's eyes grew sunny.

"Tell me of yourself," he said. "You see what my life is."

## CHAPTER THREE

Trent opened his heart and spoke of himself as he had not since he last saw Lispenard. He saw that his friend was intensely interested, yet without curiosity. The man was under no temptation to sit in judgment on anyone. It was the quality of the ideal priest.

"I have had a struggle. When you married I had already opened an office in my own town——"

"I remember," Lispenard interrupted him. "It was on Main Street. I did answer that letter from you, didn't I?"

"And after a while I found out that no lawyer would take a case against a fellow-lawyer. This all seemed professional honour to me at first, but after a while I caught on. They lived on the trades-people, and never paid their bills. Of course there were fine men in the profession in town, but they didn't think it good taste to take up such claims. But I did. I took up one case after another, and the sharks either paid up or left town. It started me in law, but I got the reputation of being an ugly fellow. It hurt me. A man doesn't want to be hated. Then I went into politics. I've spent these fifteen years fighting."

"And I in dreaming," said Lispenard, with his first touch of sadness.

"Finally I found myself tired out, and a month ago I decided to take a vacation. What do you suppose started me? An old phrase of yours, The Adventure of Life. It was like a hand beckoning me away. And

so I started out, thinking I would take my time in seeing the West, and I found you and your wife again."

"It was the voice of the spirit calling," said Lispenard. "I didn't know how much I was missing you until to-night. Ah! you must stay with us out here. Call it the desert if you will. It is the land of promise. It is in such immensities that one grows to realise the eternal verities. Petty distinctions, which we are apt to label moral, cease."

"It sounds well," Trent rejoined; "but should these distinctions you call moral, cease?"

"My dear Gulliver," cried the other, "have the Lilliputians bound you fast with their threads of convention? The distinctions I speak of are to the soul what dress is to the body—mere frippery. Don't you remember the swimming-pool, and how we little fellows dived into the water, or sunned our naked bodies afterward on a log? We were twice the boys then that we were when scrubbed up and dressed and sent to Sunday school."

"You are one of the most cultivated men I ever knew," his friend answered slowly, "yet I think you would always have had us turn barbarians."

"No, no!" he laughed; "but Greeks, my dear Jarvey." He put his hand across the table and laid it on the other's arm. His face glowed. "Don't go back East. Stay with us."

His enthusiasm burst forth. Here in the desert

would spring again all the glories of antiquity. The East did not know such soil. All that was needed was irrigation. Here would be represented the best phase of the national life, the flowering, indeed, of American civilisation. The finest spirit of brotherhood would be engendered, for no man could work alone to reclaim the desert, as on a New England farm. Irrigation meant co-operation.

Two men, about to leave, paused and listened. Lispenard addressed them. In a moment he had made his audience. The whole rude element of the restaurant gathered about his table.

Madame Campi, the wife of the proprietor, sat at the desk and made change, and bestowed shrewd, pleased glances on Lispenard. An attraction in the restaurant meant custom. She was a hard, handsome woman, showily dressed in silk and wearing considerable jewelry. Campi himself, slight, nervous, dark, wearing a continual smile, was the cook, and stood, white-capped and aproned, in the door leading to the kitchen, pleased that the one waiter was kept busy slipping in and out among his guests with the drinks. In the pauses between the making of change Madame Campi crocheted briskly. The big gilt mirror at the end of the room reflected the lights, the lounging men with their cigars and drink, Campi's capped and timid figure, the stout madame with her crocheting, the clergyman's delicate hand raised to emphasise a point.

The restaurant seemed twice as full as it really was.

Trent was thinking that Lispenard would have made a success at the law. He himself was not eloquent, but he was relentless, sure, an opponent to be feared. He wrested attention by force. His companion won it through sheer brilliancy.

Lispenard ended as abruptly as he had begun, and took up his hat and cane. "Are you ready?" he asked.

He stepped through the small crowd to the desk, and paid for the sandwiches and beer.

"You are industrious, Madame Campi," he said, as he took his change.

"So," she said. It was the one English word she used most, and it took its meaning from the different inflections she gave to it.

As they went out, Trent saw that his companion looked suddenly white and exhausted.

"How these people must care for you!" he said.

Lispenard shook his head. "I'm not their kind. They don't approve of me. People still like the professional good man best, and I don't even wear the clerical dress ordinarily. Those men cared nothing for what I said of the possibilities opening in the Southwest. They stopped to listen because it afforded some diversion. If I hadn't been a clergyman I might have convinced them. But, as they would express it, I was

off my territory. If I had gone into one of these saloons and sung a hymn, I would have made a conversion and been respected. No, I'm not the man for this place."

They walked through the plaza, which was dark and deserted, but fragrant with the invisible welcome of the flowers. The long wooden platform of the depot was lighted by a single kerosene lamp, which had a reflector and was set high in an iron bracket. They climbed the stairs to the balcony above and knocked at the upper door.

Haydon opened it, barefoot, his trousers drawn on hastily over his night-shirt.

"This is Mr. Trent, an old friend of ours, Haydon," said Lispenard. "I want you to see that he is made comfortable."

"Got his room all ready," the station-master answered. "Reckon you was surprised to find you had friends here in town. Neighbour of mine said he saw you and Mis' Lispenard meet. He was passing by on the other side of the road."

"Haydon's neighbour to every man in town," remarked Lispenard pleasantly. "Get a good night's sleep. Remember, we expect you to breakfast in the morning."

Haydon led the way through a dark hallway to a room at the end, and flung open the door. "Reckon you'll find everything all right. I put an extra blan-

ket at the foot of the bed, in case you're cold, and I brought up your valise."

"Look here!" cried Trent, as his host was about to go, "aren't you going to give me a light?"

"I didn't calculate to, with those moonbeans coming in the window as bright as day," he answered.

"You'll have to make another calculation, my friend," Trent retorted good-naturedly. "I've had enough moonlight for to-night, and if it's not going to be any trouble to you, I'd just like that curtain down and a lamp and a newspaper. I don't care if the newspaper is a week old. I want something to read."

The station-master laughed. "Well, set down and try to stand the moonshine a few minutes longer. Some strangers seem to get into a huff with us out here the minute they light off the train. The desert strikes 'em as lonesome-like."

He was gone some moments, and Trent sat at the window staring out upon a world which seemed made all of black shadow and blue and silver light.

Finally Haydon came back, pushing the door open with his bare foot, as his hands were full. Under one arm he held a newspaper and a paper-backed novel. He set the lamp on the bureau and put down beside it a small glass of port wine.

"It seems funny how our jokes sometimes come true," he said. "There Mis' Lispenard and I have

been joking for years about the friend from home we was to see get off the train some time, and here you've come. It ought to be my turn next to see someone from Georgia."

"Have you been here long?" asked Trent.

"Been West forty years, and the last ten of 'em in Sahuaro," he answered.

"Well," said Trent, "you haven't gotten over being a Southerner, have you?"

Haydon was pleased. "It's my voice, I reckon. If I can't do anything more for you, I'll say good-night."

"Hold on!" cried Trent. "Don't you want to drink that port yourself? I'm much obliged, but I've just had something."

The station-master looked doubtful. "I took it upon myself to offer it to you, seeing you was a friend of Mr. Lispenard's. It don't belong to me by rights." He lifted the glass and held it so the light caught the ruby glow. "Pretty, aint it?" He cocked his weather-eye at Trent and drained the glass. "I'm giving it to a sick fellow I've got in a room here. He came in on the train a couple of weeks ago. The doctor sent him out for the climate. He hadn't any money, and he was trying to get a job. Well, I just settled him in that room and told him not to worry, that I was going to have a little fun nursing him. I was in the war, sah, in the South. When he got well I

told him I'd get him a job as a cow-puncher. He was plucky, but weak. I held to my guns, however, and got him in bed. 'Rest is what you want,' I says." He lowered his voice confidentially. "I more than half suspicion he's got coloured blood in him. Now, I like to be charitable, but how do I feel, me, a Southern gentleman, a-nursing of a nigger!"

"I don't blame you," said Trent.

Haydon surprised him by extending his hand. "You're all right. I saw you were from the North, but if you'd been one of them damn Yanks we sometimes get down here, who would have told me I ought to be proud to nurse a nigger, and all that, you'd have seen damn little of me. I'm going to let on he's got Mexican blood in him, if anything's remarked. Matter of pride with me, so you keep mum. Mexican blood always goes in these parts, but you can't fool a Southerner." With a farewell wink he went out and closed the door, and Trent heard the soft fall of his bare feet lessen down the hall.

He was glad of the extra blanket that night. He awoke shivering just before dawn, and pulled it over him. The moonlight was gone, and he heard a faint echo of the invalid's cough. His window grew grey, but he could not sleep. The thought of Adele kept him awake. She was the kind of wife and mother his imagination had pictured her, and this was both bitter and sweet to him. He heard Haydon go down the hall

and speak to the sick man. The incident changed the current of his thought, and his heart warmed with the consciousness of the hospitality which had been shown him. He had heard of it all his life, this big hospitality of the West. In the darkness he smiled as he remembered that Adele's boys were planning for his entertainment, and so, finally, he fell asleep again.

## CHAPTER IV

HE was awakened by a little tapping on his door.

"Who is it?" he called.

"Tiggy," came the reply. "Breakfast's 'most ready."

"All right," he returned. "Tell your mother not to wait for me. I'll be over as soon as I'm dressed."

But when he came out he found Tiggy sitting on the hall-floor outside his door, a barefooted, hatless little figure. He rose and slipped his hand into Trent's. "Hurry up," he said. "Mamma's made pop-overs, and they go down if they're not eaten right away."

Trent could have hugged him. The child was so serious and charming.

It was seven o'clock in the morning. The air seemed so thin, so rarefied, that he had a peculiar feeling as if there were no air for him to breathe. He had the same buoyancy a spring day at home imparted.

Not since his childhood had he been so conscious of the sunshine. It penetrated everything; the white sand in the roadway sparkled; the low trees were pleas-

ant spots of green against the cream-coloured adobe walls; the sky above was as blue as Italy.

He hummed a favourite song and swung the hand of the child walking with him.

"I wonder if we'll be good friends when you grow up," he said, breaking off in his tune to smile down upon the little fellow.

"How funny you are," answered Tiggy. "Why don't you be good friends with me now? Why do you wait until I grow up? I may always be just a little boy. I might die."

"I hope not," Trent rejoined, too dumbfounded to make any other reply. He glanced down a street they were passing and beyond the few houses that straggled off into the desert. The sight struck a note of desolation into his mood. The consciousness of the desert came back, remorseless and cruel, waiting to swallow up the struggling town. Could irrigation prevail against such a great force of nature? How could men who had ever known the green East and North choose this land? Tiggy dragged at his hand, and he perceived that the child was hanging back to look down the street they were about passing. He had his father's sensitive frown when perplexed. But in a minute his face cleared and he laughed and waved his hand.

"Do you see him?" he asked.

Trent was puzzled.

"No," he answered.

"I see him," Tiggy answered, with another wave of his hand. "Come on, we've got to hurry if we want those pop-overs good. Mamma's tin bakes only eleven, and we can never divide them up even. So Jim and me and Papa, we each eat three, and she takes two."

She was waiting for them at the gate. "Was I cruel to send Tiggy to wake you up? But I wanted you to come while everything was nice and hot. And then you must never miss the freshness of the early morning out here. It's the pleasantest part of the day. Everyone takes a *siesta* in the afternoon." She had on the gown of the night before, which now took on a deeper tone of lilac colour in the sunshine. The black lace scarf and rose were gone, and she wore an apron and a simple collar of white embroidery.

She led the way around the side of the house, and he followed, wondering. The sunshine flecked her brown hair with gold; she raised her hand to break off a spray of blue-flowering vine, and the lilac ruffle of her sleeve fell back to her white elbow.

She looked back over her shoulder and smiled at him. "It's such fun to have you here, Jarvey, and the children are in as great a state of excitement over it as we. I'm taking you around to the back yard. We eat out of doors in the summer time."

Lispenard and Jim were seated at the table, drumming on the board with their knives.

"Hullo!" cried Jim. "We're pretending we're so hungry we can't wait."

"How do you like our breakfast-room?" asked Lispenard.

"I think it is delightful," Trent answered heartily, looking about him.

It was made of cacti sticks with open intervals, and over the sides and roof were trained vines so that the interior seemed filled with a cool green air. Near by rose the side wall of the Mission of Santa Ines. The adobe, once painted dark yellow, was cracked and broken away in places. An apricot tree with ripening fruit was thrown in shadow against it. Rising above the body of the building was the tower containing the bronze bells which were still sweet-toned.

The table was set and waiting. In the centre was the promised dish of figs, purple-black on a bed of green leaves.

Mrs. Lispenard had disappeared into the kitchen, and they heard her voice calling Jim. He rose and ran into the house, Tiggy skurrying after him. They soon returned, Jim bearing a platter which held a big golden-brown omelet, his brother following with the prized pop-overs, their pretty mother bringing up the rear with the coffee-pot steaming fragrantly.

"I never was so hungry in my life," their guest stated.

"I hope the coffee's strong enough," said Adele, her cheeks very pink with excitement and pleasure. "I remember you always took it so."

Lispenard said grace in two Latin words of blessing. "I'm never cruel enough to say a long grace because there's company," he added, laughing. He was looking well. The strong light of morning showed him no less youthful. He had on slippers, and his grey study-jacket, like a book-cover shabby through much use, had an added dignity and meaning because of this worn look. "I've been up working for a couple of hours," he said. "I seem to need no more sleep than I ever did."

Trent felt the holiday spirit of the occasion, and he was touched, even embarrassed, in his instinctive modesty, to think he was the inspiration of it.

After breakfast the two men strolled over to explore the old mission. Trent found it to be no less interesting than the conversation of the previous evening had led him to expect. There were the dim frescoes of the evangelists and angels, the quaint painting of the Lord blowing down the breath of life, the broken green balconies, the sunken main altar. The floors had long since almost disappeared, and showed in uneven patches above drifted sand. Lis-

penard climbed up into the tiny tower and rang the bronze bells, startling a flock of white doves that nested in the turret.

Trent, listening below in the half-dusk, experienced an emotion more akin to pure religion than he had known for years. The sweet tones seemed to fill his ears with echoings of the past. He felt that they sounded from an ancient frontier civilisation, and he was filled with reverence for the early mission fathers who had brought those bells such distances into the interior.

When they returned to the house they found Mrs. Lispenard alone.

"I told Jim he might have a holiday, Theodore," she said, glancing up from her sewing. "He was much disappointed that I wouldn't consent to a picnic in your honour to-day," she added, addressing Trent. "I thought you would enjoy it more after a day or two, when you are rested."

"I'm not tired," he said. "I should enjoy anything. Where does he go to school?"

"He has been through the school here, which has only the primary courses as yet, so Theodore teaches both him and Tiggy," she answered.

"I suppose you will soon be sending them East to a preparatory school," Trent remarked.

"I should like to," she said, with a touch of bitterness, "but we have no money. I tell Theodore that

Jim will make a splendid cow-puncher and Tiggy might become an assistant to him in the ministry. The bishop is a good old man and would give him his degree easily. I'm sure he'd make allowances for his not being very strong."

Lispenard smiled. "I'm determined not to be hurt by the sting of poverty. I refuse to let outside circumstances humiliate me. 'Dost thou laugh to see how fools are vexed, To add to golden numbers, golden numbers?' Wait until I get on my shoes and change my coat. I want to take you for a walk before it gets any warmer out."

While he was gone in his bedroom Mrs. Lispenard sewed nervously, not looking up at her guest. Her happier mood was gone.

"You ought to be proud of your boys," he said gently. "They are fine little fellows." A vague plan was forming in his mind. Perhaps he might be allowed to help toward their education. The sons of such a scholar as Lispenard, and the grandsons of such an able man as her father had been, were born to the training of a university.

"Are you ready?" asked Lispenard, reappearing.

She smiled a good-bye to Trent, but she did not look at her husband. He followed his guest out, his colour heightened. Halfway to the gate he excused himself and went back into the house and kissed her good-bye. She was crying.

"I am sorry I said that about being poor," she told him.

He kissed her again. "I wish you were as rich in me as I in you," he answered, and she put her arm about his neck, telling him she had not meant it, desirous above all things not to spoil his walk, but to send him off happy with his friend.

But when he had finally gone she locked the door against any disturbance and lay down on the lounge and wept bitterly. At last she stopped from sheer weariness. She had a mental vision of her husband as he must be at that moment, walking beside his friend, looking younger than he should for his age; slight, blue-eyed, visionary, talking, talking, talking. She wrung her hands nervously. Would he never stop?

What had he ever done for her, for his children? Was a husband's, a father's duty merely a negative one, merely that he should not be unkind? It was Jarvis Trent who had thought the boys ought to be sent away to school. She sat staring into the past, trying to reconstruct it and to see the possibilities of the present had she married Trent. She had broken her engagement with him to marry Lispenard. But she could not imagine her life now without her children, whose individuality was as strong as her own. Perhaps she had been wrong. She had not shown the sympathy with this last book which she had accorded his earlier writings. Her woman's pride demanded

her husband's worldly success. Whatever their intellectual worth might be, those unpublished manuscripts were only pitiful to her. Even more, she was humiliated by them. She would read for herself the chapter which he had been discussing with Yucca Armes the night before. She sat down at his desk and took it out from the drawer, and read it carefully word for word, her eyes aching with the tears she had shed. She did not pause until she had finished the chapter. Her heart was not softened. She laid her hands on the manuscript and looked at them, the hands of a gentlewoman roughened by hard work.

She turned back the leaves to the first page and read it over again. There had been a sentence echoing in her mind for months. At times she had even feared her unconscious lips would frame it while she slept and her husband would guess her condemnation of him.

But now she said the words aloud, distinctly, in the room in which she was thankful to sit alone.

"'The voice of one crying in the wilderness.'"

The very utterance was a relief after the long strain of repression. She repeated the words again deliberately, her eyes on the manuscript.

"'The voice of one crying in the wilderness.'"

Where had it led her, that voice she had followed in her careless girlhood?

## CHAPTER FOUR

To the wilderness—to the desert!

The voice of love—a siren voice. Her thoughts were bitter. She did not wish to look at her husband when his friend was by, so poorly did his youthful appearance contrast with Trent's maturity. She covered her eyes with her hands. Her old lover had been faithful to her memory. Her instinct told her that. Her inner self held aloof from Theodore; it even struggled to free itself from the clinging love of her children, and to revert to her youthful dreams of happiness.

She heard Tiggy try the front door and, when he could not get in, go around to the back. He came in through the kitchen, calling her all the way, a habit carried over from his babyhood.

"I'm here, dear," she answered.

He was frightened when he perceived that she had been crying. She took him up in her lap.

"Have you been reading a sad story, Mamma?" he asked, with the sensitive frown which was like his father's. He knew what it was to cry hard even over fairy stories, which everyone knew were not true.

She nodded.

"You oughtn't to read sad stories," said Tiggy. Suddenly he burst into tears. "You oughtn't to," he insisted. The sight of his mother crying was too much for him.

She had never had sweeter consolation. In comforting him she forgot her own grief. The trend of her nature was toward happiness. In the reaction which followed her mood of bitterness she became more joyous than she had been for days.

## CHAPTER V

THE two men strolled down to the barber-shop, the framework of which was painted in diagonal stripes of red, white, and blue. There Lispenard read the daily Sahuaro *Courant* while his guest was being shaved.

"I cannot express the great admiration a sheet of this kind rouses in me," he remarked when Trent was ready to go; "it always seems to me peculiarly American and follows the flag. The smallest of our towns has a paper, if it's only a weekly."

"I'll never forget the poem you wrote when we were youngsters and the teacher had it put in the Southbury *Sentinel*," cried Trent with an almost convulsive chuckle of amusement; "'And the air was all darkened with vampires, That swam in the shuddering breeze.'"

"I remember," he answered. "I should be tempted to thrash Jim if I found him putting on any such airs. A child with literary ability invariably offends me. In fact, I am beginning to perceive a mortifying resemblance to my former self in Tiggy."

The little clean, sparkling street looked as if newly washed in that wonderful air. In the morning light it was soberly industrious. The feverish excitement,

the recklessness of the evening before, was gone. The shooting-gallery and saloons were still open, but were as yet unfrequented, and those shops which had been dark intervals at night, serving only to mark the spaces between the lighted places of amusement, now showed an open and attractive face, like virtue waking in the morning. Suits were hung in front of the ready-made clothing store and a glass case of jewelry was rolled out by the Jewish proprietor. The druggist who rented part of his shop for the post-office stood in his doorway talking with his neighbor who dealt in groceries, chiefly of the canned variety. In the street was the lazy oxwain of the ranchman, and a mounted Mexican went by towing a young bull, which kept ducking its head in a vain resistance. The gaiety of the night still held over, fresher and more charming because of the morning air; the spirit of adventure still stirred the pulses, and the mountains beckoned.

"I never was in such a cheerful place in my life," Trent said enthusiastically.

They turned into the tobacco shop, which was built open on the street and closed at night by a lattice-work of iron. From there they crossed the railroad track and struck out for the Indian village, which was about a quarter of a mile away. It lay low and level, an irregular, brownish square of adobe huts in the natural mud-colour. As they drew near they passed

the small farms where rude attempts at irrigation had been made, and they saw an Indian following a plough and ox. Beyond were the blue castellated mountains. The scene, in its primitive simplicity, was Biblical.

But it was not until they had gone beyond the confines of the village that Trent saw the open desert in the unbroken sweep of its wide desolation. It was a world such as he had not dreamed of. It was remote, and indescribably solitary. In the moonlight this solitude had seemed mysterious. Now there was no mystery beneath the blazing sun, and the earth lay naked and unconcealed. Lizards and horned toads panted on the burning white sands, and jack-rabbits skurried away at their approach. Birds with drooping wings guarded their young from the mid-day heat, for often the low growth in which they nested was too sparse to give sufficient shade. It was a land of fading blue and grey, of infinite distances. About them the grey breast of the desert became warmer-hued as they walked through an *arroyo* of yellow sand, or showed silvery green where the grease-wood spread itself, fighting for life against the burning heat and drought. But, however the brown breast softened to their approach, always that sense of merging distance intensified until the mountains no longer dominated the scene, but became gigantic waves of the desolate whole, and this effect of water was increased by the wavering vibra-

tions of heat over the sands. They passed strange cactus growths, and the wind was ever lifting the sand in miniature whirls.

"Dust-devils," said Lispenard, noting them.

It dawned upon Trent that he and his companion had not spoken for a long while, and he glanced at him, surprising in him the same look he had seen in his eyes the night before—the blue, visionary look of a man inviolably wedded to a secret passion.

"How do you stand it, Lispenard?" he asked abruptly. "It's desolation itself. There's nothing green, there's no colour to relieve the eye in this dead level of monotony."

"My dear fellow," protested his friend, "do you know what it is called? The painted desert. It drips with colour, as an artist would express it."

"You're wrong," retorted Trent jovially. "'Drips' implies moisture, and there's none here, except in that bottle you brought out with you. Give me a sip of it."

He uncorked the bottle and put it to his lips. The water was warm and flat. "I never tasted anything so delicious," he said, passing it back. He was conscious of no fatigue; his buoyancy even increased with the heat. He swung his cane at a huge cactus thirty feet high, having small purple blossoms and fluted like a Greek column; he paused to wonder at the graceful palo-verde, whose willow-like stems and

branches were bright green, but having no leaves to give shade; he made a feint at a jack-rabbit; he raised his voice and shouted. This unfettered raising of his big voice filled him with childlike delight. He put his arm about his companion's shoulders. "Why, Lispenard," he said, "I haven't shouted like that since we fellows used to go to the swimming-pool. Don't you remember how we youngsters used to yell and holler at the echo-rock, and what a thrill it always gave us to hear the echo of our own voice coming back at us? You talk of beauty here. Man, you're enchanted! Think of the greenness there, and the rippling water, and that old rock covered with moss! I shall think you're hipped if you talk about beauty in this great waste."

"It is here, though, that you learn to love nature; here at the sources," Lispenard answered.

"Do you know how I feel?" cried Trent, like a boy. "I feel as if I were soaking in sunshine, and yet I'm not uncomfortably hot."

The mountains toward which their steps tended seemed further away and more elusive than ever, but he no longer cared. He was willing to walk on indefinitely. But suddenly the rocky heights which had seemed so far rose almost in front of them.

"The nearness of an object can be as deceptive as though it were remote. The air is always weaving illusions," Lispenard commented. "Those mountains

are the sirens of the desert. Many a man loses his life searching for fabled mines the Spaniards tell of."

They began to climb the nearest mountain, following a trail which was many centuries old. Halfway up, they heard voices, and surprised Miss Armes and Jim spreading out their lunch in the shadow of a big boulder.

"I knew I heard someone coming up," she cried. She was laying a napkin on the rocky floor, and at her side was a basket. Her hat was tossed aside; her shining hair was knotted low in the nape of her neck, and through the belt of her linen blouse she had drawn a spray of yellow-green blossoms. The warmth of noon seemed infused into her personality, and her eyes, which he had thought shadowed and sad the night before, now looked up at him with frank friendliness.

"We didn't bring lunch enough for all," said Jim sulkily. It didn't seem to him fair that after his proposed picnic to them all had been refused they should swoop down upon him now, when the food supply was limited.

"Well, the Lord may send down manna to us, then, you unnatural son," answered his father. "Jarvey, you and I will sit down with our bottle of water, and watch them while they feast."

Trent laughed. He was rather pleased than otherwise by the boy's sturdy disapproval. It was honest, if not hospitable.

"I asked everyone to come, but you all refused," Jim continued, as he watched Miss Armes pile up the sandwiches. "I guess there's enough, though. I've counted three apiece all around, and one left over."

"I should suggest to you to take that thirteenth one, then," said his father, "only it's an unlucky number. I can't advise you to eat it, much as I'd like to see you enjoy it."

"We thought we would go up to the old fort after lunch," said Miss Armes. "Is that where you are going?"

"No," he answered; "we had no definite plan, so we will accept yours and tag along after, if my son will permit." He was in his most charming humour, more youthful than ever in his grey suit, retaining a boyish habit of tossing his head when talking, that he might throw back the lock of straight blond hair which fell persistently over his forehead. Time seemed to have passed him by, save for those subtleties of expression which come with maturity of thought.

Trent missed Mrs. Lispenard and Tiggy. After a while it dawned upon him that he was, perhaps, the only person in the little party who did.

The mountain encircled them; the porphyry rock rose like great walls, here and there streaked red, again covered with the yellowish stain of a hardy lichen. Behind them was a cave, where the water collected in the early spring. The creeping wind stirred the sand

heaped on its floor, and showed the white skeleton of a rabbit. "Some wolf lives here, I guess," Jim remarked, noting other bones. Above, the sky was turquoise. A condor sighted the little group, and swept toward them on a long incline, then verged away at a shout from the boy.

They watched it circling away on seemingly motionless wings until it became a black speck in the blue.

"I'd like to have killed it," said Jim savagely.

Miss Armes was looking up, and as Trent noticed her lifted profile against the boulder back of her he understood why Mrs. Lispenard had told him he would grow to think her beautiful. The outline of her features was perfect. But he felt that it was not a beauty to stir a man's pulses. It was too remote, too classical. She was a woman to waken wistful longings that touched on dreams. He felt this to be so, although she would never attract him personally. Moved by a sudden thought, he glanced at his friend. Lispenard's eyes were fixed on the girl's face with an expression which baffled him. It might have been only the content any beautiful thing inspires, or a deeper and more personal emotion. But, whichever it was, the peculiarity to Trent was the happiness of the look.

She turned to them both with a smile. "I can't help believing in the existence of spiritual evil when such a hideous thing as that bird can live in the physical world."

## CHAPTER FIVE

"There was a time when I argued finely that everything had beauty which expressed perfectly its own peculiar character," remarked Lispenard, selecting a mellow apricot from the depths of the lunch-basket. "I was a mush of religious emotion at the time, and I was determined to see beauty in everything which had fitness. I've quite changed."

"I believe in positive sin as opposed to positive virtue," Trent joined in. "No one can deal with criminals as I have had occasion to, and not come to some such conclusion. Still, I never saw but a few whom I felt were hopelessly bad. It wasn't heredity nor accident. It was actual sinfulness." His face became stern. "I think that I was intellectually just in such cases, and looked only at the particular offence for which the prisoner was committed, but the temptation was to crush him to the fullest limit of the law. It was the same spirit which made me stone snakes when a boy."

"Don't!" said Lispenard. "I'm nerveless when it comes to killing. I get weak."

"Yet you were always enthusiastic over war," answered Trent. "I can remember that when you were a boy you used to pore over maps of battles. At one time you even thought of entering the army."

"I know it," he said. "That was because I scented glory in the smoke of war."

"I'd like to go to war," said Jim. This was the kind of conversation he enjoyed. As a rule the so-

ciety of older people was intolerably dull to him. The fact that Miss Armes' father had been killed in an Indian outbreak was an element in his admiration for her.

"Don't think I've no backbone, Jarvey," Lispenard continued. "You're the born judge, but it isn't in me. I feel the other man's position too keenly. That's why I can't buttonhole a reprobate and inquire into the state of his soul, and condemn him if he doesn't mend his way."

"That's all self-indulgence on your part," his friend retorted. "Do your duty, and cut off their heads, even if it gives you a qualm, when they don't come up to time. Theodore, you're the kind of man who'd rather let a man kill you than kill him."

Lispenard admitted this, with some amusement. "Unless the instinct of self-preservation rose superior to my real desire."

"And I'd be so sure the right was on my side that I'd prefer to do the killing," said Trent.

"You can just bet I would, too!" cried Jim, helping himself to the thirteenth sandwich. His appetite prevailed against his discretion. Cozzens had taught him respect for superstitions, arguing that if mankind had held to them so many years there must be some truth in them.

He felt more intimately acquainted with the big mine-owner than with his father, who puzzled him.

"I'd put my money on you, though, in a fight," he added loyally.

"Thank you," said Lispenard. "I shall try to wear my blushing honours modestly. May your father prove to you, Jim, that he is a man of muscle."

While they were talking Miss Armes had but half listened. She sat sideways, resting on one arm, her hand spread flat on the rock. A small indigo lizard was playing over her fingers.

"It feels the warmth," she said. "I never saw one quite as deeply blue. It must take its purple colour from the shadow of the mountain above us." As her eyes met those of Trent he had to reconstruct the mental impression he had already formed of them: they were the colour of the lizard creeping over her white hand.

"If we're ever going to go," said Jim impatiently, "we ought to be going. We've been hanging around here more than an hour doing nothing."

"You seem to have finished eating only just now," his father suggested.

"That's so," said the boy, somewhat abashed.

"Ah, Nature! How ungrateful thy children are!" Lispenard cried. "No sooner are we fed than we forget we were hungry. It is significant that we never say grace after a meal."

"What I like about a picnic is that you never have to hear grace said," Jim asserted.

"And this from a clergyman's son!" laughed Trent.

Miss Armes drew away her fingers with soft reluctance, and the little creature, frightened, slipped into a crevice of the rock. "I should like a sapphire necklace just that colour," she said.

Trent smiled. It was the first feminine thing he had heard her say.

"What is it?" she asked, perceiving his amusement. "Wouldn't you like a sapphire necklace?"

"Not on myself," he answered, laughing. He did not wonder that Lispenard thought her beautiful.

She repacked the basket, and Lispenard took it. "I suppose I ought to make Jim carry it, but a boy is so much more burdened by such a thing than an older person. Look! There is that lizard again, out on that bit of rock. It has lost its colour."

Trent had to look sharply before he could see it. Then he saw its tiny bright eyes, whose glitter seemed almost evil. Its skin was mottled, dull, and wrinkled. He wondered, with sudden repulsion, how she could have let it play over her fingers.

The afternoon became almost unending to him. He was more depressed by Adele's absence than inspired by the company. His loyalty to her made him resentful of their unconcern. He felt that she should have been with them instead of this girl, and he experienced a deepening disapproval of the situation, a dis-

approval which centred finally on Miss Armes. He had known many women, none intimately, but all sufficiently well to have been impressed with their general conventional delicacy. It seemed to him that she lacked in that modest propriety which was to be expected in a woman of her class. She should not be willing to remain the greater part of the day on a mountain-top in the company of a boy, a young married man who did not conceal his evident attraction toward her, and a third person who was almost a stranger. He corrected his first judgment. After all, it was they who had followed her, and it was not to be expected that she should give up her plans for the mere accident of their arrival. But her beauty faded in the light of his keen observation, until he felt that those moments when in the shadow of the rock she had appeared so to him had been a delusion, like the colour of the lizard. The dislike he had taken the evening before bridged across that impulse of liking, and filled him with distrust. He remembered how he had encountered the watchful regard of her pale, oval face beyond the glow of the lamp. He distrusted a watchful person. It was a maxim with him that a disingenuous man was unsuspicious.

He saw that she felt the growing change in him, and several times he met her gaze, no longer watchful, but timid, the gaze of an indulged woman who wonders at any man's disapproval of her.

They wandered about the rocky floor, which they reached after a long climb. It had once been an Aztec fort, and was one of the last records to mark the end of a civilisation long dead. Lispenard pointed out the ancient trail going on still further; the loosened boulders which must once have marked a wall; some half-obliterated drawings on the solid rock, of lizards and snakes and birds. Trent was dizzy in that rarefied air. The snow on distant mountain-peaks, shining in the sun against the blue, dazzled him; but his friend's eyes were as bright and alert as those of an eagle. He was glad when they both sat down near the crumbling, ancient wall, and lit their cigars.

"I must admit that too much of anything like this makes me melancholy," he said. "It is too far removed from the life of to-day to be cheerful."

"I think the remote past is always cheerful and inspiring," said Lispenard. "It is the near past that is depressing. What could seem farther away and sadder than the youth of our parents? We feel that we never could go far enough back to touch their lives then. I remember I used to feel that keenly as a child."

They puffed contentedly at their cigars. In the serene present the remote past of which he spoke seemed of no more value than that past which was nearer. They looked at each other and laughed, like two boys, and Trent blew smoke-rings of a perfection which

had made him famous in his undergraduate days. Miss Armes and Jim had followed the trail farther up the mountain, and they were alone.

"Can't you imagine how an eagle must feel?" Lispenard asked. "Haven't you seen the eagle type in people? It is always a fine type. Major Armes was that kind of man, fierce and grey as an old eagle, and a born fighter. It would have broken his heart to die in his bed. I think his daughter knew this, for she never took the death of her father as tragically as might have been expected. He died in that awful massacre some years back, you remember. He was primitive, with all his worldliness, primitive as an Indian."

"I think it always takes primitive people to name their children after trees or States or famous generals," Trent commented, flicking the ash from his cigar. "I have a client, a woman, whose father named her Stonewall Jackson; and don't you remember old man Stickney, in our town, who named his sons One, Two, and Three Stickney? Mrs. Lispenard was telling me last night that Yucca was the name of some tree out here."

His companion nodded. "I have in mind a poem," he said, turning his bright eyes upon his friend. "The subject is the eagle. I have the conception, but I can't rise to it in expression. Well, it is better to fall short of my best than to content myself with an

exploitation of mere cleverness which might bring in money and cheap notoriety, like a merely popular novel, and even rhyming. And there is nothing more injurious to a man's development than hack-work. It takes the bloom from his genius. And sometimes I have thought genius is just that delicate bloom so easily gone. You understand?"

His friend made no reply. Lispenard, present, deprived him of the power to make those practical suggestions which he knew would come to him when away. The man had the gift of making Trent's own solid world dissolve, becoming unsubstantial, forming itself into evanescent beauty through whose divine expansion riches and worldly success, weighted by their own grossness, sank. He wondered now if even Adele always understood her own husband—if there were not moments when she must feel strangely baffled.

Miss Armes and Jim were returning. They heard their voices before they appeared.

"I have often wondered why it is that there should be so many perfect flowers, although the botanists tell us not, I believe,—stupid, meddling fellows,—and so seldom a beautiful face. I suppose it is because our souls make our bodies," said Lispenard.

"You argue ill for those of us who are not handsome," he answered shortly. "I have known some hideous saints."

"How unpleasant!" Lispenard exclaimed. "Here

they come. We heard your voices before you appeared. What mystery there is in a hidden voice! It is a subject for romance. Did anyone ever fall in love with his own echo, as Narcissus did with his face? I don't suppose a great singer really hears his own voice as we do. I am going to bequeath to Tiggy a book which shall contain the titles of the books his father had in mind to write. What did you find up there?"

"Nothing," said Jim, disgusted. "It just ended halfway up to the top. Let's go home now. Cozzens is coming back to-day. Come on. I'm first down."

"We did find this, however, and I thought the trail might commence again farther up, but we were getting tired," said Miss Armes. She extended her palm to show Lispenard a flint arrow-head. It was not her voice nor her expression which betrayed her to Trent. It was an almost ineffable gentleness of manner, as difficult to define as if a flower should give its fragrance. A pain ran through his heart, for the incident reminded him of that time when he had seen another woman maintain the same attitude toward his friend, and his own happiness had gone out. He did not blame Lispenard, nor was he resentful, although he had wondered that a man who had so little of the physical about him should be so irresistible to women. But, knowing his friend as he did, he had grown to think that it spoke well for the innocence and sweetness of women that this should be so. It was the re-

gard women were always eager to bestow upon a spiritual leader, just as men were apt to be more aggressive and to question such a right in another man.

"Look at Jim!" cried Lispenard, as they started down. "He'll beat us. Every healthy boy is always anxious to win out, even if he is obliged to delude himself into an imagined race." He took the lead. "Look out for loose boulders!" he shouted back.

His warning came a second too late. Miss Armes slipped, and would have fallen had not Trent caught her arm.

"How awkward of me!" she cried. "I don't know when I ever slipped before. I think it was an unconscious acting on suggestion." She glanced up at him, laughing. He held her arm as though she were a culprit. His face was stern. He was thinking of Adele, and that he missed her.

A blush succeeded her amazement at his manner. She withdrew her arm and stepped ahead of him, that she might walk alone, nor did she once look back at him the rest of the way down. It was not until they reached the bottom, where the triumphant Jim awaited them, that he met her look again, and then he was stirred out of his abstraction. Any timid wonder at his disapproval was gone. He had a swift conviction that her father's blood spoke in that look. But her expression changed instantly to its accustomed gentleness, and she made some courteous, indifferent speech

about it being later than they had realised. It was as though his lapse were too unimportant to disturb her good breeding.

However courteous and hospitable she might be to him in the future, it would be for the sake of his friends, not for his own. He knew instinctively that she disliked him, knew it as he did when he decided in court against a woman. She was like her sex, resenting as presumptuous any judgment of them from a man.

It was nearing sunset as they started home across the desert. The world was becoming fairyland. Crêpe-like veils of pink and blue and violet were being woven in the air. The mountains, so dull, so monotonous to their approach, were beginning to take on great splashes of purple. Deep clefts appeared, and the tops rose magnificently.

Wistful, bewildered thoughts disturbed him, the thoughts almost of youth: " those beautiful days when I was so unhappy! " He remembered with a half-smile the words of the famous Frenchwoman. He could hear the steady conversation of Miss Armes and his friend. Brilliant as he knew it to be, he preferred the sturdy silence of Jim, tramping along at his side. The day had started happily. He felt desperately lonely. He could think of no one save Adele, and this with deep longing, as though she were once more the sweetheart of his youth. This one day had seemed

longer away from her than the fifteen years that had become so short since their meeting.

They neared the little town, mellow and brown in the level rays of the sun. It already had a homelike look to him. He could see the red tiled roofs, the suggestion of green the trees gave, the small spirals of smoke from many hearths. There Adele awaited their return.

## CHAPTER VI

HE did not return with Lispenard to supper. "I may stay some time, and I am not going to become a burden on your wife," he told him. "You will see me later in the evening. I have made arrangements for my meals at Campi's."

The long desert twilight had passed into the moonlit night when he finally arrived to find them waiting for him on the porch of the little home nestling in the shadow of the old mission.

"The boys left good-night for you," Adele said. "I was cruel enough to make them go to bed before you came. It is nearly nine o'clock. Jim was so tired he went right to sleep."

Lispenard laughed. "Sit down, Jarvey," he said. He continued to puff at his pipe, his eyes bright with amusement. Several nights before, he thought, he had seen Jim hurrying home from Haydon's after ten o'clock. He said nothing of this the next morning. He had done the same thing himself when young.

"Isn't that a picture for you, Trent?" he asked.

The silver light had struck the roof and bell-turret of Santa Ines. The pale, phosphorescent outline was indescribably beautiful, and as they watched it a

belated dove fluttered home to its nest in the old mission.

"Shan't we go over to see Miss Armes?" Adele asked. Supper had been so late that she had missed the excitement of going for the mail, and she was restless because of the long day at home.

"Does she live far?" her guest asked reluctantly. "I think it is delightful here."

"I know it, but it will soon be too cold to sit out longer," she answered. "She lives about a block down the street. I want you to see her home, too. It is said to be the handsomest adobe house in the State. It is built in the old Spanish style and has an inner court. Her father died after it was completed. He never enjoyed it much, poor man!"

"Does she live alone?" he asked.

"She has an aunt who sometimes visits her in the winter, and they have always kept an old Mexican housekeeper, a disagreeable, miserly creature, although they say she comes of a fine old family, and I must admit she is really devoted to Yucca. Then, too, she makes a pet of Tiggy, and bakes him sweet cakes."

"She seems young to live alone like that," was his comment.

"Oh, she's not so young!" she retorted impatiently. Then she dimpled and laughed. "Am I not horrid, Jarvey? But then I get so provoked with her to live

alone like that when she could travel. You know she's rich. I actually believe she loves the desert! Let us go," she added, rising. "Don't you feel the chill beginning to creep into the air!"

"There isn't any chill at all," her husband protested, "but she'll never admit anything is right out here in the desert."

"Then why did you bring me to it?" she cried triumphantly, as though her question were the only argument possible. She put her arm affectionately about his shoulder. Deep in her heart she was repentant of her bitter mood toward him earlier in the day. "Aren't you coming, dear?"

"Adele is the only person who ever makes me feel cross," he said humourously. He kept hold of her hand. "Did the moon ever shine more radiantly than it does now on Santa Ines? Trent, when you marry be sure that you and your wife agree in taste, and it won't seriously matter if your ideas of morality differ."

"Good morality is only another expression of good taste," she said.

"Oh!" he groaned, "did you ever hear such hopeless shallowness? Come, let us go before you mortify me further. Yes, I've locked the door. Don't ask me to go and try it again. I won't."

"You see, Jarvey," coaxingly, "Theodore doesn't appreciate my anxiety about the children."

"She's afraid someone may steal Jim," Lispenard said, with a chuckle, as his friend went up obediently and proved the door to be locked.

The three walked abreast down the quiet street, and turned in at the rose-arbour which led from Miss Armes's gate to the front door.

"How we love the elusive," Lispenard cried, throwing back his head. "I see the moon glancing through the leaves, and I am filled with witchery."

His wife, half pausing to follow the example his words suggested, was suddenly conscious of Trent's nearness in the close arbour. The little while he had been seated next to her on their steps that evening had enveloped her in an atmosphere of tenderness, a going-out, as it were, of his whole being to her for sympathy. She had met his wistful eyes in the moonlight. The subtle femininity of her own nature recognised the change the day had wrought in him, and wondered. The scent of the roses was sweet; she saw the moon through the leaves; the witchery of girlhood blew like a breath across her spirit. Her husband's voice sounded distant. She was touched and softened by the romance of Trent's long devotion.

There was no response to her knock. She entered and led the way down a dim hall.

"Yucca," she called, "are you there?"

Miss Armes opened the door at the further end, and her graceful figure struck Trent with a sense of

familiarity. "We were sure you would come," she said. "Did you knock? I fear we were so busy talking I didn't hear you. Good evening, Mr. Trent."

She gave him her hand cordially. "Here is Mr. Cozzens. If you did not come in he was going to drop around later at Mrs. Lispenard's and meet you. We all expect to share our guests out here, you see."

Mr. Cozzens rose from the chair in which he had been seated, smoking a cigar, and shook hands heartily with Trent.

"I suppose you've heard the little chaps speak of me. I'm taking a hand in their education same as their father. I'm given to understand by Yucca, here, that you're an old friend." His voice had a husky drawl that was, somehow, impossibly pleasant.

"When did you get back from the mines?" Mrs. Lispenard asked him, as she arranged herself comfortably in a hammock hung across the room.

"I swung in to-night," he answered, resuming his seat. His weight disguised his real height, and his light clothes intensified this look of bulk, but Trent recognised a type in him, and knew that the muscles were like steel beneath that almost babyish rotundity of face and figure. His sandy hair was cut in a comely bang across his forehead, and he wore the drooping moustache of the typical cowboy. His eyes were remarkable, full and grey, narrowed by long

squinting at a shadowless landscape, their dominant expression one of command.

Lispenard began turning over some magazines and books on the table. "I am looking for that review you spoke of to-day."

"It is right under your hand," Miss Armes answered. "The page is folded out, isn't it?"

"Wouldn't you all like to hear it?" he asked, seating himself.

"Oh, dear," murmured his wife, "I thought we were going to talk."

"Go on," said Cozzens, turning in his chair so as to face the reader squarely.

She gave him an irritated look, then seeing that Trent was watching her she pouted like a pretty child, and finally, filled with delicious humour at her own absurd affectation, hid her face in the pillows she had piled in the hammock, and laughed outright.

Cozzens looked at her indulgently. "She's no older than Jim," he remarked, with husky pleasantry.

Lispenard read well. He had the full and sympathetic intonation of the born speaker. But Trent made only a pretence of listening. The room and its occupants distracted his attention. The lamp shed a soft glow and a fire burned on the hearth, and yet it seemed to him that the light was unusual, until he thought that the bright sunshine of his day on the desert had affected his eyes somewhat. The room in-

terested him. It was less homelike than the Lispenards', but more richly furnished. He had an impression of Mexican colouring in the suggested orange and vermilion tones. He noted the crossed sabres on the wall above the mantle, and looked about to see if there were a picture of the old major.

"What is it?" his hostess enquired, speaking low, so as not to interrupt the reading.

"Nothing; I was merely looking to see if there were a picture of your father," he answered.

"It is in the other room," she said. She was pleased, and he thought she looked at him for the first time with liking. He watched her as she resumed her basket-weaving. "I learned how to make baskets from the Indians," she said. She was seated on a divan that ran across the side of the room opposite him. The long strands of straw trailed from her lap to the bottom of her dress, and there was a bundle of it on the seat beside her. Her face was pale above the tan straw, pale and subtly reserved, full of artistic power, more youthful than feminine, recalling again his first impression, that she might have sat for the portrait of one's ideal poet or painter in his early promise. But for himself, he admired women like Adele, women who were childlike in their maturity, frank, open-hearted, sunny. Yet how pale she was! The walk and long climb that day had been too much. He softened chivalrously as he noted Cozzens's contrasting ruddi-

ness; even Lispenard's pallor was healthful, and, he thought tenderly, without looking at her, that Adele's cheeks were pink and warm as when she was a girl.

"I am disappointed in it," Lispenard remarked, as he finished the article and flung the paper down. "It is a tangle of platitudes."

"No wonder I felt as if I were still out of doors!" cried Trent suddenly. He had finally realised that the wall above the divan was of glass, like a great window, and that the long silken curtains were pushed back to show the sky. It was no wonder that she had looked pale against that background of intense blue air. "I have been wondering and wondering what was the matter with my eyes, and hadn't observed that the wall was glass." Trent, sober, was the frowning judge; laughing, he was a great boy.

"It was my own idea," she commenced, when Cozzens interrupted her.

"Yes, you can bet it was her own idea," he said, flinging a handful of cigars hospitably on the table toward the two men and lighting himself a fresh one. He was economical with matches, and he held a burnt one over the lamp-chimney until it ignited. "Yes, sir," puffing, "she came to me and said, 'Cozzens, I've got a damned good idea——'"

"I didn't, either!" she cried. "I merely asked him if he didn't think it would be splendid to sit within

doors and yet be able to see the desert when these nights are so wonderful."

"I know it's beautiful and I know it's unusual," said Mrs. Lispenard, "but I don't like it. I don't think it is homelike. I like to draw the curtains and have the boys playing about and Theodore reading. That is the only time when the world is quite shut out, the only time I don't have the desert before my eyes."

While they were speaking the rising moon sent a ray of light into the room. It fell on the girl's hair, and its phosphorescent glow recalled to Lispenard the rising light they had been watching on the old mission.

"Santa Ines," he said, smiling, his eyes as intense in their blueness as the brilliant air outside.

The girl's white profile grew unreal. The silver moonlight slipped to her hands weaving the yellow straw.

"You remind me of a fairy tale I read in a book I bought for my little niece last Christmas, and it was so long since I had read such a story that it made quite an impression on me," said Trent. "I don't remember it in detail. You would probably remember it, Theodore," turning to his friend. "It was about a miller who sold his beautiful daughter to the Evil One——"

"I think 'Evil One' is so delightful," put in Lis-

penard. "The proper fairy stories always have him in."

"And the Evil One cut off both her hands. Then the King came along and saw her in the garden eating fruit from the trees with her mouth, for of course she had no hands. But he married her and had a pair of silver hands made for her. Tiggy must have it in some book of his," ended Trent, looking at Adele.

"I don't remember it," she answered.

Surprised at her tone, he glanced closely at her, and saw that her colour was feverishly bright and her eyes wet with unshed tears. He knew instinctively that she was hurt and jealous. He had guessed her resentment of the girl's beauty, and knew that she must now feel he had joined with Lispenard in admiring her. Her pained humiliation went to his heart. He longed to convey his loyalty and devotion by a look, a gesture, some mere ordinary word. He could not bear to have her suffer. She was like a grieving child. But he did not suggest his sympathy in any way, and the denial was like a physical wrench.

"I am tired," she said, rising; "I must go."

"No," said Cozzens, "don't go yet. Don't you want to hear my new song? I got it from a Mexican at the mines."

Her husband looked up in some surprise. "It isn't eleven o'clock yet," drawing out his watch as he spoke.

She hesitated, then yielded, and resumed her place in the hammock.

"She has times when she gets anxious about those two little chaps," said Cozzens. "Lord bless you, who'd hurt them?"

She smiled faintly. "Tiggy is such a baby yet."

Trent's heart was aching. She had never been more lovable to him than in the emotions through which he saw her pass, the jealous hurt, the impulse to leave, her womanly yielding for fear she would spoil the others' pleasure; her accepting Cozzens's remark about the children, in her pride, lest her real motive for wishing to go might be guessed.

Cozzens was strumming on Miss Armes's mandolin, picking out a tune to which he sang a song in the Mexican patois. He had a rich, throaty voice, and the little song was gay. It cleared the atmosphere of the room.

Miss Armes rose and drew the long curtains together.

"I know you don't like so much moonlight," she said, and Mrs. Lispenard thanked her with a smile.

"I know I am foolish," she murmured, her dimples restored.

"This side of the room leads into the court," continued Miss Armes, rising; "come and see, Mr. Trent. It is scarcely warm enough to sit out there to-night."

He followed her through the door she opened, and

found himself in a narrow corridor with a colonnade, the slim pillars of which ended in arches at the top in the Moorish style. This corridor ran about the four sides of a small court.

He had an impression of tropical luxuriance. He heard the splash of spray in the basin of a fountain, and saw the white blossoms of the magnolia.

"This is like the fairy-story," he remarked. "It must have been in some such garden as this that the miller's daughter walked and ate from the trees."

"Yes," she rejoined, "my father planted pomegranates and figs and olives and apricots. The apricots we had at luncheon to-day came from here. Did you know you all forgot the rest of that story? The king became jealous and sent the poor maiden away, but at last he repented, for he saw he had been deceived by the Evil One. So he went in search of her, and when he found her, her two white hands had grown again, by the grace of God, so that she did not need the silver ones any more."

Within, Cozzens was humming his gay serenade. The tinkle of the mandolin blended with the falling spray of the fountain. Trent's pulses were stirred. An ineffable sweetness was in the air, and he was conscious of the girl beside him, strange and beautiful mistress of this strange house and garden!

"You like that little Mexican song, don't you, Jarvey?" called Mrs. Lispenard. She could see him

standing in the light of the open doorway, and observed the look of dreaming in his face. "You always loved music. I remember. You must get Yucca to play for you."

Her fresh, pretty voice recalled him to her side. The sweetness of the garden was cloying; its suggestion of romance unpleasant to him.

They sat and talked until late, Trent's mood very tender with his sense of protection toward Adele as she swung gently in the hammock beside his chair. Lispenard made him indignant, much as he loved the quality of the man. His friend talked wisely, wittily, reading a paragraph from one book, a verse from another, always instructive, never pedantic, enjoying the spell his own talk cast even upon himself.

His wife's judgment changed. She had been wrong. "A voice crying in the wilderness!" No, no, no, she said to herself, it was not so. She resolved to go back and re-read his chapter in a different mood. Her pride in him returned as she saw that his intellectual poise was more marked than that of the other two men. No one yielded to the spell of his personality more quickly than she.

At last he came over and sat down in the hammock by her side, tired with his restless walking about the room. The lamp was so low that Miss Armes blew out the waning flame and heaped on more wood in the fireplace.

Trent saw Lispenard take his wife's hand and hold it between both of his. He was surprised and pleased that he felt no pang of jealousy. Surely Theodore must care for her as she deserved. Yet he recalled the peculiar happiness with which he had seemed to regard Miss Armes when they had been on the mountain that day, and was puzzled. If he loved her how could he be happy, being the honourable man he was; and if he didn't love her why should the mere sight of her make him so happy?

"Of course, you needn't believe it if you don't want to, but I've seen the strangest sight," said Mrs. Lispenard, "and Theodore just laughs at me. But it's true, Theodore, you horrid thing."

"We're going back to the primitive experiences of mankind," he said, his voice quivering with amusement. "My wife has discovered a were-wolf prowling about the house."

"I never said a were-wolf," she retorted. "I said a common grey wolf."

"They're mighty common this season," said Cozzens, ceasing his touch on the mandolin for a moment. "Too little rain makes them fierce. They're hanging around pretty close."

"And Tiggy tells me it's a friend of his," she ended.

"Poor Tiggy," said his father. "He is cursed with an imagination."

"And it has one paw lopped off," added Miss Armes. "The little fellow confided that much in me."

"I have never seen it," Mrs. Lispenard admitted.

"I shall never get over this, Trent!" cried her husband, "never. I suppose it's the same wolf the soldier turned into in that story of Petronius."

Adele's scornful glance convulsed him. She turned her back on them both and addressed herself to Miss Armes and Cozzens.

"Tiggy never tells a lie."

"This will be the death of me," Lispenard cried.

Cozzens leant forward across the mandolin on his knee. His shrewd eyes were speculative. "Where do you think you saw it? They can laugh," with a nod toward the two men, "but I've seen queer things around camp in my time that have set me thinking." Clever, hard-headed, as he was, he had a mystical vein in his nature that made him attach weight to the supernatural.

"I've seen it," said Miss Armes, "and it has a paw lopped off just as Tiggy said. It ran by in the road one night."

"No," said Cozzens, "it wouldn't come further than the outskirts of the town."

But she held persistently to her story. Not even when it was time to go, and they said it was only fair to drop the joke and tell them the real truth,

would she admit it was otherwise than she had first said.

Adele kissed her good-bye at the door. She was so pleased to have her story corroborated that her good spirits were restored. It dawned upon Trent that the two women were really fond of each other in spite of Adele's jealousy.

He went away amused. As he followed the other three through the rose-arbour, he looked back over his shoulder and saw their hostess standing in the doorway, holding the candle with which she had lighted them through the long hall. He reached the gate, and she closed the door.

He and Cozzens said good-night to the Lispenards at their gate, and went on together down the lonely street toward the plaza.

"I only came in here last night," he said, "and yet I feel as if I had lived here a long time."

Cozzens was delighted. "It's because it's home out here to every stranger that comes along."

Late though it was, he would not let Trent go to the station, but took him up in his own room, which was above the bank. He owned the building. "It's the most up-to-date one in town," he said.

Trent followed him up the stairs through two connecting offices into his bedroom beyond. It was a large, clean room, having a very bright wall-paper and a set of cheap oak furniture. "I had that put in for

looks," said Cozzens, pointing to a sham fireplace." I can't stand the muss and dirt a fire makes."

It seemed to his guest that he had never been in such a bare and orderly place. A towel was spread on the bureau, and on this were a lamp, a whisk-broom, and a brush and comb. A photograph of Lispenard's boys stood against the mirror, and was the only picture in the room. On the mantle were a small china barrel which held cigars, an ash-receiver, and two paper-backed novels laid exactly, one on the other.

Cozzens lighted the lamp and put some water in a tin cup, which he placed by means of a patented arrangement over the chimney. While the water was heating he brought out whiskey and glasses from his closet and placed the barrel of cigars on the table. " We'll have a nippy," he said cheerfully.

Trent read the titles of the books on the mantel, and saw they were not literature according to his understanding of it. He found such companionship in his books that there was always something pathetic to him in a man who did not know the fine flavour that the best gives. He did not know when he had been so drawn toward a man as he was toward Cozzens. Lispenard had already told him of this man, of his picturesque career, his splendid service as superintendent of Indian affairs in Arizona. It was believed that he knew the country and its various trails as no other man did; he spoke Spanish and the Mexican *patois*

like a native; he had amassed an immense fortune; and those powerful shoulders had once carried for over fifty miles a sick woman abandoned on a trail to die of thirst—a feat of almost superhuman strength in that alkali country.

Trent felt his heart warm toward him as he talked enthusiastically of the wonderful climate with its health-giving property, his faith in the open-hearted energetic people, and their great resources in the gold and silver mines. He saw that it was the boundless freedom of the West which had let him develop. He would always have been a power, but in the East he might have been only a controller of the money market, or a political boss. "He has no culture, but he has imagination. It was he who named Sahuaro," Lispenard had told Trent on the way home from Miss Armes's as Cozzens walked ahead with Adele. "I pointed out to-day the cactus of that name—a fluted Greek column broken at the top, you remember?"

Cozzens smoked incessantly. He saw that his guest noted his habit of keeping his left hand in his pocket.

"You wonder what I keep jingling that money for," he said. "Well, the truth of the matter is, that when I was young I ran against hard lines, and money came hard. Well, I've got a lot now on paper and land and a hundred thousand cattle, too, and all that, but none of it gives me half the satisfaction and sense

of security that them few birds in my pocket do. Roughing it on the desert as I do has taught me there ain't anything so valuable as what you got on you. A whole river somewhere else ain't going to satisfy you like one bottle of warmish water if you're off on an alkali plain, and I hold the same thing's true about money. I always keep a good handful of gold pieces in my pocket. And I like to feel them there. This having so much on paper goes against a fellow who's washed up the real stuff himself."

He laughed, for with all his *naïveté* he knew that no one made shrewder investments than he did himself.

It was long past one o'clock when they parted. Trent had not been given a key to the hotel. It was not Haydon's custom to give one, and in this he was a tyrant, for what curious reason no one knew. As Trent waited for him to open the door that night he had a delicious sense of getting in too late. It was so long since he had been responsible to anyone for his comings and goings that he enjoyed this new sensation. He even found himself apologetic when the station-master, barefooted, and in his shirt and trousers, let him in.

Haydon was magnanimous. It's all right, Judge." He had found out his guest's profession, and did it honour. "I want any gentleman to feel that he's at home in this house. I'm afraid I kept you waiting. I was so dead asleep."

Trent found his room as he had left it in the morning, and he was obliged to make up the bed himself before he could retire. No morbid thoughts kept him awake this night. He went to sleep like a child, and did not waken until late into the morning.

## CHAPTER VII

A FORTNIGHT passed by, and Jarvis Trent still lingered. The delight of the climate was upon him. The air of the semi-tropical desert gave him a fresh lease of life. He got a horse and went for long rides. He had been too poor when a younger man to have a saddle-horse, and when he could have afforded it the thought of such a luxury, through long denial, never entered his mind. But here everyone rode. He had expected to spend his vacation in an extended trip through the West; he found himself tempted to spend it all in Sahuaro. He was gone several days with Cozzens on a trip to the mines. Jim was allowed to go with them, and the three had their own tent in the mining camp, which had been named Marble City. Trent had never seen a place so forlorn before, nor had he known until then that a forlorn place could be so cheerful. Coming home the mountain trail one hot noon they met the opposite of Cozzens, the type of the unsuccessful prospector, a bowed, worn figure, grey with alkali dust, muttering to himself, his glazed eyes still bright with hope of finding fabled gold. He remained a haunting memory to Trent for years. Trent invested in some mining property, and made this an additional excuse for lingering in Sahuaro. He began to see how it was that a man

might let time glide by in such a place, excusing his inertia by the thought that he intended sometime to return to the East, which must always be home in the best sense to the person born there. He sought the acquaintance of the mission priest, urged by his desire to know better the desert and its people. The old man kept much to himself, having learned reserve from the Indians among whom he had lived so long. His physical resemblance to them was great. His grey hair hung straight to his shoulders beneath his black sombrero, and his skin was brown as his brown rosary. The silver crucifix he wore was an ancient one, and he held as sacred talismans parchment scripts by the holy fathers which had been found hidden in Santa Ines. He was indifferent to the crumbling beauty of the old mission, and had a new narrow chamber of a church where he and his Indian acolytes held services. And Trent could never make out as he chatted with him whether the old priest were more Christian or Pagan, so imbued was he with the superstitions of his Indian people. To Lispenard he seemed both ignorant and dogmatic. He had lived too long near him to get the same picturesque view that his friend did. Trent's pleasure had become simple. The arrival of the Overland train started his morning properly; its coming at night was the event to be looked forward to all day. He and the invalid were the only guests of the hotel at present, and they made each other's acquaintance

as they sat out on the balcony with its border of flower-boxes. He was surprised to learn that the young fellow was homesick until he was shown the picture of a girl inside the cover of his watch. But he saw the boy's spirits brighten as he grew stronger, and finally he was well enough to take a position on a cattle-ranch. Trent missed him. He had not seen any evidence of coloured blood in him, and he learned afterward that it was Haydon's weakness to suspect most dark-skinned people who were not out-and-out Mexicans and Spaniards of this hereditary taint. The station-master confided to him that Mr. Lispenard paid for the room and the luxuries which the invalid had enjoyed. Trent was touched to hear that his friend gave so much out of a salary he knew must be meagre, and spoke to him of his own wish to contribute something. Lispenard was embarrassed. "It is the least I can do. It's conscience-money. I am not the proper kind of parish priest. Don't you remember, I told you so? If I were I would get hold of those forlorn strangers myself. But I'm not sympathetic with sick people. They antagonise me, and I antagonise them. Haydon is a born nurse, and I put those matters in his hands. It's the least I can do."

Evening after evening he and the Lispenards and Cozzens and Miss Armes spent together with the same eager pleasure in their mutual society as if they were

children. Through them he made the acquaintance of an old Spanish family, and gained an insight into customs and traditions new to him. Not for many years had he taken such delight in the company of his fellows. He encountered opinions, but not prejudices; the atmosphere was too big for personalities, and so he found that while he liked Miss Armes no better than at first, they got along together fairly well. He learned to appreciate the quality of her mind, if he never felt any warmth for her. That moment of fascination, of intoxicating sweetness, when he stood near her in the fragrant enchantment of her garden had never returned. Her charm that night was like a vanished perfume; he might recognise it again, but he did not remember it. Like shipwrecked people, none who desired the society of his fellows could afford the indulgence of dislike. Their common humanity drew them together in that vast and lonely desert. He was convinced that she was attached to Lispenard, but his mind did not dwell on the suspicion. It seemed ungenerous on his part to do so, and he thought, too, that her frequent visits to the Lispenards' home, were also due to her desire to get away from her lonely house, filled with memories of her father. And he was invariably touched and softened when he noticed the old cape about her. He had known women who wore the army insignia for the sake of their lovers, or because they were becoming, but

she wore the Major's cape over her slender shoulders as if in mourning for him. Trent did not permit himself to think whether Lispenard cared for the girl in turn or not; he knew his friend too well to take him seriously as regarded women.

Small as the place was there was no spirit of gossip in it. These people were the reverse of the New England country people he had known. Far out of the world as they were, they yet seemed to be in touch with it. They were full of inspiration; they were filled with the spirit of the opening West. He saw that passionate hatreds and loves existed and often led to the taking of life, but those pettier emotions, the vague jealousies, pique, disloyalty, that miasma of the spirit, vanished in such perpetual sunshine, for the soul as well as the body seemed to be steeped in it. He was still convinced that he loved Adele as dearly as ever, but the first fever of meeting her subsided, and he felt much as he did when they were children, and she had chosen Lispenard to be her little lover. That childish instinct had been the true one; her later engagement to him had been the mistake, for he saw that she worshipped Lispenard. But as far as he was concerned she would always be the first and only woman in the world.

The only depressing experience he had was his attendance at church. He and Cozzens arrived home Saturday night from the mines and went to church to-

gether. In front of them sat Mrs. Lispenard and the two boys. The congregation was meagre, a mere handful of people. Miss Armes was there, and sat alone. Her old Mexican housekeeper attended the Roman Catholic mission. The music was feeble, and Lispenard preached above the heads of most of his congregation. It was a disheartening service, and one that left Trent, who was no church-member, profoundly depressed for his friend's sake. He felt that the man's brilliancy was lost. Above the altar was the round window with its grey lamb. The lamb had an absurdly cynical expression, and he did not wonder at Lispenard's aversion to it and his temptation to throw a stone through it.

There was no evening service, and Lispenard dragged his two friends off for a walk, insisting that they owed him that much after their absence. He had worked hard on the revision of his book while they were at the mines, and had it ready to send on its rounds to the publishers. "The only thing which troubles me," he said, "is the money for express I may have to pay out."

When he went home a little before ten, leaving Cozzens and Trent to their cigars on the balcony of the depot, his early departure was due to his desire to wrap up his manuscript and count the pages once more to see that they were in order. He opened the gate and walked hastily up to the house, wondering

if Adele had paper and twine for him. He had an appreciative thought of how absolutely he relied on her housewifely spirit to have things always ready for his convenience.

He found her alone at his desk. The boys had gone to bed.

"Are you writing letters, my dear?" he enquired, searching for his pipe on the mantel. It seemed long since he had smoked. Cozzens's cigars were so heavy he never touched one of them.

"To whom would I write?" she answered. "What friends have I left? I have lived so long out here that they have forgotten me."

His mood of happiness and anticipation which had brought him home so joyfully, vanished. He put back his pipe on the mantel and sat down with a sudden weariness. "What would you have me to do? I have told you if I received a call to another parish I would go."

"Why do you think to deceive me, Theodore?" she asked. "You do not anger me. I cannot quarrel with you, but you know and I know that if you received such a call you would destroy the letter rather than show it to me, for fear of my insistence that you should accept the opening."

"What has changed you so, Adele?" he asked. "Is it Trent's coming? Has he made you discontented?"

"Yes," she said. "You both started out even in the world. If anything, people thought you the more gifted. I see him now, well-off, his reputation established, well-dressed, while you are so shabby that I notice it and am hurt when I see you together. I have been sitting here while you were gone and trying to make up our accounts. We are poorer than ever."

His relief was so great that he felt a rebound of spirits. This adding up of accounts invariably induced a tragic mood in Adele. "My dear," he said, now genially, "it isn't wisdom in our financial straits ever to figure up. Ignorance is bliss in our case. The burning question of the moment is, not next Sunday's chicken, but whether we have the money in the house to pay the express on my book to-morrow morning. I would send it C. O. D., if I were not afraid that might prejudice the publishers. What do you think?" He could not win a smile from her. "At least we have enough to eat and drink and clothes and good health."

"So have the Indians," she answered stormily. "Are we no better than they? You may despise luxury. But I want money for my children. I am mortified that so often they have been obliged to wear things sent to us in missionary boxes. It does not matter that my life has been ruined."

He was troubled at last. "Do you mean that I

have ruined your life, Adele?" Then, with that sensitive frown so characteristic of both him and Tiggy when troubled, he added gently, "I thought we had been so happy here."

"Ah, Theodore," she said with increasing bitterness, "your egotism never permits you to see your children's necessity nor to judge how I may feel. I have hated it so here that I have sometimes felt I could leave you gladly if that would be leaving the desert behind." Her words seemed to clear her own mind. Why should she not leave? Why not? How aloof they were! What had she in common with this threadbare philosopher, troubled now and made uncertain by her passionate appeal? She thought of Jarvis Trent, to whom she had once been engaged. He stood for what she had lost, worldly position, comfort, the means to do for her children. Her face burned.

As yet Lispenard had not answered. His blue eyes were fixed on her in a puzzled gaze.

"Oh, Theodore," she cried, "for God's sake, stop thinking and feel something! Can nothing hurt you, can nothing touch you?" She laughed at the absurdity of such an appeal to him, and her mingled emotions brought her to tears.

He rose and came around the table to her. "Adele, if you will have patience my book will bring in money yet."

"Oh, no it won't!" she cried. "What money have

you ever made out of anything you have written? In your inmost heart you despise money. Cozzens could have made you a rich man if you had allowed him to invest our poor little savings. But, no; you must put them all in books. You do not care what we lack. I tell you, Theodore, I have lost you. The desert has taken you from me. You do not love your boys. You are sweet and pleasant until I could wish you were hateful, if that would only show you cared. You cannot deceive me. And I have ceased to mean much to you. Why, Jarvis Trent is more conscious of me than you; he——" She stopped, shamed by her own words.

"Adele," he said, striving to take her hand, "I have never loved any woman but you."

"That was your past self," she said. "You have ceased to regard me now. And I am sick of living on the past and consoling myself with memories of the time when you did. Oh, do not, if you have any respect for us both, talk of love again to me! You care more to-day for Cozzens, for Yucca Armes, than for me and the boys. And I have ceased to care for you. You love truth, Theodore; then have it. Your heart is dying within you. What kind of a clergyman are you? It is all pretence. You do not love your congregation nor your church. They weary and bore you as I do. And now that you have taught me the lesson of giving way to one's own selfish desire, I may as well tell you that your philosophy has made

me hate religion, and your passion for poverty has made me long for luxury. I am going to leave you." She was trembling, but no longer tearful.

Her words did not alarm him; he knew her bitter mood would pass, but he thought of the limitless desert, and had a picture of his poor passionate wife trudging away on foot, anywhere, to be relieved of his presence. "I wish I had money to send you away for a change."

His words softened her, for she knew they were sincere. No one could be kinder than Theodore when his sympathies were aroused. She hid her face in her hands, and the tears trickled through her fingers and fell on the sheet of paper, blurring her careful figuring. She spoke brokenly. "I used to tell myself when Jim was a little baby that I would never love him best. He was given to me to take care of, but you chose me out of all the world. I wanted to be faithful to our earliest love. I was romantic. But I have changed. Our children have separated us."

"I don't think I quite understand you, my dear," he said, frowning in his distress.

"Had there been just you and me I should have remained content even here, for you were my world," she said piteously; "but you threw all the responsibility of the children on me until I have become absorbed in them to the exclusion of you." She repeated the words, "to the exclusion of you."

"I think you are making a mistake," he answered. "I am not brutal, and yet you will think me so when I say that you are self-indulgent. You have let your maternal love become a kind of intemperance with you so that you see everything from that standpoint."

"You do not care for them," she flamed out at him, "you do not care for them."

"I do care for them," he said, with more sternness than he had ever used toward her. "But you are right when you say I am not wrapped up in them. Why should I be? I love them and I appreciate them as individuals, but I should be a hypocrite if I said that at present my own life did not interest me more. I may in time sink my own ambition in my hopes for them. But that will be when they are older."

"And what of them in the meantime?" she asked. "While you are doing what pleases yourself who will educate them as they should be? Your sons are the children of gentle people, but what associates have they here? I am still able to keep Tiggy with me, but Jim spends his spare moments with that crowd which hangs around Haydon."

"He is learning life there," he answered, "just as Trent and I learned it at the corner-grocery when we were his age."

"You call yourself ambitious, Theodore," she said, as if she had not heard his last remark. She looked incredulously at him, his shabby coat, his delicate,

troubled face. Her mood of the other day returned to her. "The voice of one crying in the wilderness!" The words rang in her ears as though they were spoken aloud. And she had followed that voice in her girlhood, that fond and foolish girlhood. She looked at her husband with aversion. She longed to crush him by repeating that terrible phrase. Ah, could he but realise how she felt and see himself as he was!

He put his hand on her bowed shoulder, and she thrust his arm away with a movement so violent that it was like a blow. He sat down and covered his eyes with his hand. The scene was humiliating to him.

She recalled his words of only a short while ago: "I thought we had been so happy here."

"Theodore," she said, "Theodore."

He took his hands from his eyes and tried to smile at her, grateful for any overture that would lead to peace. She put her arms out to him across the corner of the table, and he bent forward to kiss her. His lips were cold with emotion. She leant forward until her head rested on his breast as he sat next to her, and he put his arm about her. A sense of happiness and comfort deeper than she had known for years swept over her. Once more his mood was that of protection. She felt restored to wifehood. She could feel his heart throbbing beneath her cheek, the poor heart which at one time had threatened to invalid him.

Lispenard, waiting for his wife's sobs to die down, held her closely. The clasp of his arm was warm about her, but above her head his blue eyes gazed out of the window past the shaded lamp with a far-away expression. Between the half-drawn curtains he could see the soft yellow stars of the moonless night, and he thought of their courtship. Then love-making had been their supreme duty, the plan on which the world was made. Adele had clung to their early romance; she had lived in her affections and developed no intellectual interests. He was filled with compassion for her. She reproached him that he had ceased to care. She did not realise that what she longed for was the glamour of youth. She would be eternally won. She could not learn that every soul was happy only as it stood alone, when it was able to resign all affections which were tormenting because they possessed the element of personality. He wished that she might grasp the present for its own sake, and not always view it by its contrast with the past.

She withdrew herself gently from his arms. "I do not feel as if we could sleep, either of us," she said. "Would you like to take a little walk?" For the sake of his own dignity and hers, she would not speak of this scene between them again. She saw that it was useless to attempt to make him understand how she felt about the boys. She got him his hat and cane, drew her lace scarf about her head and shoulders, and

waited while he turned down the lamp. She saw him hesitate.

"What is it, dear?" she asked him.

"I was going to get my book ready to go by the early express," he said.

The motherliness of her nature went out to comfort him. "How would it be if we did that first and took our walk later?" she proposed.

"Thank you," he said gratefully.

She went out into the kitchen and brought back some stout twine and paper. She had no faith in his writings, but she forced a smile to her lips. A vague plan she had been thinking over for the past week took definite shape in her mind as she watched him. Finally he sat down at the desk and directed the package.

"I don't know when I have been apprehensive before, but suppose it should be lost," he remarked as he rose.

They went out together into the quiet street of the sleeping town. His nature was gentle. He was glad for the restored peace and that she took his arm.

"We have the quietness of old friends," he said, turning to her with a smile.

She could not speak. And he had once been her young and ardent lover!

"When you look and smile at me like that, Adele," he said, "I know you forgive me much, even my poverty."

Pride kept the smile on her lips. He should never know how he wounded her. Yet there burned in her the one question she most longed to ask, longed so to utter that he read something of her desire in her eyes.

"What is it, Adele? Are you keeping something from me? Do you want to tell it to me?"

Between his face and hers she seemed to see another. Had it been less beautiful she could have spoken. Its perfection was fatal. She would not humiliate herself by comparison with it. Her soul took refuge in the dignity of her motherhood. For her children's sake, she would not ask their father the question which trembled on her lips.

"No," she answered, "it was nothing."

Lispenard, restored to harmony, spoke of the thoughts which come to one under the open sky at night. She listened to him with a certain dutifulness, but she felt that her spirit had gone beyond his in its suffering, and that he lacked the sympathy to understand her.

The night was sweet about them. The stars shone resplendently in the dark heavens, not with the scintillating brightness of the north, but with a lambent, yellow glow.

"Have you ever thought that the sky on Sunday night always has a solemn look to one from long association of church-going on that evening?" he said. "It is a fancy I had as a child. I used to think the

stars never looked very merry Sunday evenings. They didn't twinkle enough to suit me then. I ought to love Sunday, but I don't."

They stood looking up some moments, and at last she lowered her gaze to his face. What vision did he see that she could not? Why did he have so often that impersonal, secret look which seemed to remove his spirit far from hers?

She looked over the wide desert; she saw the ragged black mountains, cutting like great shadows into the starry sky; the stillness was appalling. She felt as if her heart were breaking.

"Theodore," she said, putting her hands on his shoulders, "look at me just once as you used to. Look at me kindly, Theodore, in the old way. Do not make me feel I mean nothing to you."

## CHAPTER VIII

THERE were white clouds in the blue sky, and they were dazzling as snow on sunlit peaks. Jarvis Trent felt that he could have spent hours watching that brilliant panorama of white and blue.

"I shall take a vacation out here every year," he said enthusiastically, breaking the long silence that had fallen between him and Mrs. Lispenard.

The two were alone on her veranda, waiting for Lispenard to return. A parishioner, an old person who had been ill a long time, had sent for him early in the afternoon, and he had not yet come back.

She looked up from her sewing. "So you too find it beautiful, Jarvey?"

He had forgotten that she disliked the country, and that he had sympathised with her when he first came.

"You need not look at me so anxiously to see if you have hurt my feelings," she continued, with some amusement. "I knew you would grow to love it here. I am not surprised. But when I die, it shall be like Falstaff, 'babbling o' green fields'!"

"Adele!" he exclaimed. It was he who was hurt by her cold tone.

"I am not blaming you," she retorted, with a flash of anger. "I am glad you find it beautiful. But why should it be denied to me to find it beautiful, when my life is laid out here? I have prayed often and often that I might learn to love it. It is all hideous to me. There is nothing sweet. I am glad that neither of my boys was a girl. This would have been no place to bring up a little daughter."

She bent her head over her sewing again and worked rapidly on a shirtwaist she was making for Tiggy. The breeze stirred the brown curls at the nape of her pretty neck.

"Don't you see how hideous it all is?" she continued, pinning the shoulder-seam to her dress at the knee, that she might get a firmer hold of the cloth, and starting a buttonhole. "There is no peace in this desert, still as it is. Everything is fighting for its life. Even the flowers are armed. I have never admired their strange colouring. They have no fragrance. Theodore talks about their character. It is ridiculous to talk of a flower having character. I hate their morbid tints. What do I care about their admirable fitness to their environment? He might as well try to convince me that a mole is as beautiful as a bird, because it is fitted to burrow under the ground and hasn't any eyes. Often I think the sea will reach us somehow, and rush in and claim the desert for its own!"

For the life of him, he couldn't have taken her seriously at that moment. She looked so pretty, and she was so angry. Her eyes challenged his contradiction.

"It hurts me to have you like the desert. I feel that you are siding with Theodore against me."

"Against you!" he echoed, stung to the quick.

"Then why do you say you like it?" she cried passionately, her eyes filling with tears. "It is a land of thirst and starvation. Can you imagine any man naming his child after a thing which would grow out here? And yet Major Armes named his daughter after the yucca, with its scentless yellow flowers and its thorns like spikes. You needn't look so incredulous, Jarvey. The flowers and trees have thorns like spikes, great spikes!" Her dimples came and went at her exaggeration. She continued more calmly. "I feel as if I were in an evil land, and that all the rest of you have taken a draught from some witch's cup, so that you are enchanted and can see beauty only in what is hideous. I believe that if we had had a little daughter, Theodore would have wanted to name her Cactus!" She shuddered.

He could not help laughing. "I have been thinking you looked very young and pretty as you sat there scolding me. Was that a delusion on my part?"

Her colour rose. "Oh, well, you know what I mean." She was pleased. "And you think Yucca Armes is beautiful. I can see that you do." She could

not mention the girl's name in that connection to her husband, but she would scold Jarvey Trent as much as she pleased.

"You read a great deal into me," he answered, his amusement deepening. He stooped to pick up one of the buttons she had dropped, and restored it to her work-basket. It no longer troubled him to see her using the gold thimble he had given her when they were engaged.

She spoke rapidly, as though it were a relief. "If you learn to like the desert you will like her. You cannot see what I mean now, but you will if you stay long enough. And I hate her as I hate it. I cannot see her beauty." There was a silence. When she finally broke it her words and manner were humble. "I do not mean that I do not like her, too. She has always been lovely to me and kind to the children, and Theodore has enjoyed talking to her. I think I have learned from Theodore not to be severe in my judgments. She cannot help being what she is. Sometimes I don't even think she knows what she is like," with a solemn look. "And when we are alone together I love her. She is the only congenial woman friend I have out here, but——" She paused, at a loss to explain further what she felt, and sat staring helplessly out at the sandy road.

"My poor little child!" he cried, forgetting everything save that she was Adele, whom he had

known almost since her babyhood. All the chivalry of his strong nature was wakened.

"Jarvey," she said, turning to him, "I want to ask a favour of you. I have been trying for days to see you alone." She glanced about nervously, as if even then she feared there might be someone to see and hear them.

"Yes," he said simply. He stood ready to do anything she might ask of him, trusting her too fully to doubt the worthiness of the request.

"I don't know how to ask it," she said. Her cheeks were burning. "I want you to lend me some money."

He stammered in his amazement. "It is all yours —all I have."

She was mortified by his surprise. "You do not understand. We are so poor."

He was filled with shame that he had forgotten his friend's poverty, and he realised that for the first time in years he had been unconscious of either poverty or riches. Even his investment in mining property had been more from the desire to have some foothold on that splendid mountain range than to make money. Adele was right. This was a land of enchantment which made a man forget.

"Lispenard might know he could have all he wished of me," he said, for he concluded that there was some debt. He wondered if there could be a mortgage on their shabby adobe home, if the salary from the church

were unpaid. He was grateful to think they had asked it from him instead of Cozzens. Yet, as he witnessed her painful emotion he was indignant with Lispenard for getting her to ask for the money for him. All that instinct of protection she roused in him fought fiercely now against his better judgment.

"I don't want Theodore to know anything about it," she answered.

"You shall have whatever is in my power to give," he told her.

"You may think it too much," she said timidly.

"I don't think so," he said, with a faint smile. "I have little enough use for my money as it is."

"Could you let me have as much as five hundred dollars?" she asked, still with that pitiful timidity which sat so ill on Adele.

He could have wept. Five hundred dollars, and she could have his fortune! "When would you like it? I can give it to you now. I have my cheque-book in my pocket."

"If you please," she said, folding up the shirtwaist and laying it on top of the basket.

He followed her into the house, and she cleared a space for him on the desk.

"Theodore is not very orderly," she said, with a little smile. "He leaves his papers scattered all about."

He wrote the cheque out and handed it to her silently.

She took it feverishly and thrust it into the front of her dress. Then, impulsively, she seized his hand and pressed it tight against her in pure gratitude. "Oh, Jarvey, I could trust you so, always, always!"

"It is nothing, nothing," he answered. He was agonised by the scene between them, and rose to go.

"Jarvey," she said, "you have always been so good to me. Since you came I have sometimes thought of the past, and——" She hesitated.

He wished she would spare him that. He could not forget that while Lispenard stood between them it were better that no mention of that past were made. She stood very near him. His pulse still beat to the pressure of her fingers on his wrist when, a moment since, she had taken his hand and pressed it to her. He had a strange reversal of feeling to a scene long gone by. He seemed to be standing once more in her father's parlour and receiving his dismissal anew, because she loved Lispenard. Her tears, her blushes, her appeal, put him at her mercy. The serenity of the past weeks was gone—that peace of heart when he felt that their resumed relationship was innocent as that of their childhood.

"——and that I have marred your life," she continued, "and I hope you will forgive me."

"Adele," he said, "I can't stand it to have you talk that way to me."

His grim passion appalled her. For the first time

in her life she was afraid of him. She watched him go, helpless to detain him. When he reached the gate he looked back and raised his hat once more. Something had gone out of his smile; it was no longer eager. She went into her bedroom and looked at herself in the mirror. Had she lost her charm and attractiveness? But she recalled the frank admiration in his eyes when she had been sitting beside him on the porch, and knew her fear in that respect was groundless. She could not give up the tribute of his long devotion. It had been like balm to her heart, so wounded by her husband's indifference. She saw suddenly, with absolute clearness, that her humiliation at asking a favour from him had betrayed her into the fatal mistake of asking his pardon for the past. In her gratitude for the money, her impulse had been to atone for what was long gone by, and she had felt his instinctive lack of assent to her words.

Trent closed the gate with a strange sinking of the spirits. The day had lost its glamour; the enchantment was gone. As he walked by the Santa Ines Mission he saw that the rose vine clambering over the yellow wall looked dry and withered in the hot sunshine. The light hurt his eyes. Miss Armes passed him on her way home from downtown, and he experienced afresh the old throb of antagonism as he returned her bow. He felt that her grave eyes divined his spiritual inquietude. He had his horse saddled, and went

for a long ride, taking a new direction to the west. He felt that he could have ridden on forever, following the steadily declining sun. The solitary grandeur increased, seeming to absorb him and his horse, until he felt that he was the only witness of the passing of the day. The breeze blew along the ground, raising the sand in tiny swirls. Through all his loyalty to Adele a strain of newborn condemnation beat, a persistent pulse that would not lose itself. Her vanity had spoken in that reference to the past. It was the appeal of the woman who, knowing that she still is loved, asks forgiveness of her coquetry.

Had she really cared anything for him she would not have hurt him by speaking of those days. He saw more clearly than ever before that she was absorbed in her husband and children. Had she become conventional and uninteresting to him all in a moment? Her words had given him a shock of surprise. He did not regard his life as marred. It was full of interests and ambitions of which she knew nothing. Her romantic vanity had made her overestimate her power. She had read more into his moods of loyalty to the old ideal than was really there, and her over-statement revealed him to himself as nothing else could have done. He drew up his horse, that he might sit still to watch the majesty of the fast-dropping sun, fiery-red as it approached the heated horizon. He had seen it go down so over a desolate waste of ocean. He recalled Lispen-

ard's words—"The conventions one thinks moral might well cease." Had his love for Adele been but a convention with him? Was he, too, changing; were his convictions, his ideals, shifting like the shifting sands that gave to his horse's feet?

The spirit of the desert spoke to him, full of sublimity and melancholy. He wondered if Adele would give up the world for the man she loved, and he thought not. It was better so, as things were in the world, but for himself—rather the passionate heart, although it entailed the mistaken judgment.

He returned late, and dined alone that evening at Campi's. Cozzens was out of town. He did not call in the evening as he had been accustomed to do, and Lispenard missed him so that later in the evening he hunted him up and found him in the balcony at the hotel, and spent an hour or so with him. He, too, was in a depressed mood, saddened by the death of his old parishioner, who had been unwilling to go.

"After all his devotion to the Church, he had no more confidence than you might have, Jarvey."

"I have no fear, my dear fellow," Trent answered, with one of his infrequent smiles. He laid his hand affectionately on his friend's knee. "What do you say to getting the boys and your wife and Miss Armes, and having some kind of a picnic at Campi's? Madame Campi informed me she had too much ice-cream left over from dinner, that the guests to-night all went

to pie. She was much annoyed, for pie will keep over and ice-cream won't. I don't want to miss any time with you all, for I find I shall have to go in a day or two. My business demands it."

He knew that Adele would be relieved to see him after the scene of the afternoon. She met him easily, with no consciousness save that of gratitude in her manner. Several times during the evening he caught her looking at him with such sweetness and affection that he felt he had done her an injustice in his thought. Her evident trust in him awakened his chivalry anew.

And she was pleased. Her tact had sprung from desperation. If he deserted her after his years of faithfulness she must indeed have lost her charm.

He went home after his little party that night and wondered what she wished the money for and thought of her as of a child who begged money innocently to make a gift to someone. He knew her well enough to be sure she did not wish it for herself, and it flashed into his mind that she had asked for it that she might follow his example and make some mining investment for the boys.

## CHAPTER IX

WHEN Mrs. Lispenard found herself and the boys on the great Overland train as it pulled out of Sahuaro, she realised her daring for the first time. She had contrived that her departure should be a surprise, and had started before the familiar crowd at the depot realised her intention. It had been easy to make Tiggy accompany her, but Jim was so obstinate that he brought her to scolding and tears. She had told him her plans after exacting a promise of secrecy, but it was not until she threatened to go on alone with his brother that a fine feeling of chivalry toward his pretty mother made the boy consent to go with them. He felt that neither she nor Tiggy was able to look out for the other, and he was reassured by her promise to let him go directly home if he did not like the place to which she was taking him. His moment of parting was therefore made bearable by the anticipation of immediate return after they had once touched their destination.

She herself was buoyed up by excitement. When the last call for supper sounded she led them through to the dining car. None of them had eaten much for tea, which she had served earlier than usual that she might leave everything in order.

Tiggy played with the dishes the waiter brought him. He tasted some of each, but was too happy to be hungry. He saw the reflection of the lamps in the polished silver and glass. The faces of the deft, white-aproned negroes shone as they carried the trays of food. It was very puzzling to pick out their own man, and he made the mistake of smiling at the wrong one. The bread was cut in squares on a silver boat, and the steak was on a silver platter, with a big silver bowl on top to keep it warm. It was like being in a fairy palace. He kept turning his little, well-brushed, blond head to see what was going on behind him. He smiled at his mother across the table. It was she who had brought him to see all this. For once he was silent, when he might have talked.

Luxury had never seemed more desirable to Mrs. Lispenard. She could see herself and her two boys in the mirror at the end of the car; Tiggy's dear little person, and Jim, unhappy, sullen, but undeniably handsome. She wished she might have a portrait painted of them all together. There were only two men besides themselves left in the dining car, and she was conscious that they looked at her with admiration. She lingered over her black coffee, and peeled a peach prettily for Tiggy. She experienced neither anxiety nor longing for her husband in this new environment.

She had telegraphed her brother to expect them.

He was a physician in a New England city, and as both he and his wife were fond of children she knew their nephews would be welcome. There was a famous private school for boys near them at which Jim could be a day scholar.

When they returned to their own section the twilight still lingered, and they sat looking from the window until it was time to go to sleep. The sky was dark, save for a strip of pale gold in the west. Cacti whirled by in that gray air, dim, sinister forms with crooked arms outthrust as if they would detain her. "The desert looks as if everything had gone to bed, Mamma," said Tiggy.

She drew him closer. Jim sat opposite them, looking from the window without speaking.

"The two princes have run away from the tower," Tiggy said. He liked to fancy that the picture above the fireplace in the living room at home represented himself and Jim.

The great train sped on and on, and yet the desert grew no less. Mountain ranges rose to their vision and vanished; but always the whirling sands, always the threatening cacti! Mrs. Lispenard's imagination ran riot. She felt that the desert was putting a curse upon her in revenge for her defiant hatred of it. The gold faded from the horizon line into a pale and chilly grey.

The porter began to make up the berths, and she

ordered the boys' made up first. When they were in bed, and she had kissed them good-night and drawn the heavy curtains, she went back to the window. It was a night of darkness, unrelieved by moon or stars. Through the half-open window the air poured in warm and dry, the desert air, with the old, old smell of the desert in it. Could she never escape it? The speed of the train seemed ineffectual, its mad race hopeless. It stopped, and she looked out upon the typical plaza of a desert town, a duplicate of Sahuaro. She felt that they had described a circle and returned to their starting place.

She arose and went to the boys' berth. Tiggy awoke while she looked at him.

"What is it, darling?" she asked. "Shall I bring you a drink?"

He had his father's way of smiling an assent without speaking. When she returned with the water he drank it thirstily, and lay down again to instant slumber. Jim raised himself on his elbow. "I can't sleep," he said moodily.

He forgot his chivalrous protection of his mother in his own need of comfort. She kissed him and promised that if he were not happy in the East he might return at once. She began to suffer from a strange humiliation, for she felt that the boy was her judge. His distress was not entirely due to homesickness, but partly to his conviction that she was do-

ing wrong. He had asked her where she got the money for the trip, and she had evaded the question. She knew that he had not been satisfied with her explanation, that his father was not to be told because he would oppose their going. Jim knew that the mystery lay deeper than that, and was concerned with the money for the journey.

She sat beside him until he slept as quietly as Tiggy, then she went to the dressing room to make herself comfortable for the night. Her sense of luxury increased. She was extravagant with the five hundred dollars Trent had given her. She could have travelled in the tourist car, but had chosen to take a Pullman section. The other passengers had long since gone to bed, and so she had the dressing room undisturbed. As Tiggy had been delighted with the silver and glass in the dining-room car so now she was pleased with the mirrors which lined the room; the polished nickel basins; the faucets running hot and cold water; the plentiful supply of clean towels. She remembered that her own linen towels at home were wearing out, but she did not care. She had patched and darned them so often that there was little of the original fabric left. She took out her hairpins and let down her long, thick hair. It fell about her face, and white arms, and shoulders, and made her look like a girl again. The several mirrors gave her back to herself as though they should say: "You are still young

and beautiful, the world is before you." Her thought in starting had been only for her children. Now she forgot them in the freshness with which her own beauty came to her. There was much of the actress in her nature, and she watched her smiling reflection grow pensive and her eyes darken tragically. Her heart beat high with exultation; youth, for beauty was youth, looking back to her from the mirrors, flooded her being. Now after fifteen years she was going home. Lispenard became but a memory in her present mood. She and the boys—they three.

As she stepped from the dressing room the conductor passing through opened an outside door, and the air blew in upon her, still the desert air. Her spirit shrank within her as she crept into her berth and lay there shivering. All her courage had departed, and she lay awake until the heavens began to grow less dense. Then she turned on her pillow and shut her eyes against seeing another dawn brighten over the desert.

Jarvis Trent had seen Mrs. Lispenard depart with her two boys in that general whirl of amazement, and had stood staring after the train until it became but a speck on the far-narrowing track. Then, anxious to escape the comments of the crowd, he turned and walked away with a vision of Jim's tragic young face peering out of the moving window. It was not only to Lispenard she had said good-bye in so cavalier a fashion, but also to him. As he thought of her hus-

band he realised gloomily how shabby his own action would now look in having given her the money she had asked of him. He was in the pretty position of giving a woman money enough to run away from her husband and take her children as well. Strangely enough he felt no pang just yet at her departure, but only those waves of anger with her which he used to experience during their brief engagement. Adele, tender, weeping, unhappy, won his finest chivalry, but this calculation of independence on her part angered him. He could not admit even to himself that his anger was due to the wound she dealt him in leaving without the slightest farewell. He felt now that he had parted from her twice, but his thoughts dwelt persistently on Lispenard, and the position in which the man was placed. Adele had failed in his ideas of honour as once before when she had played fast and loose with them both. At last he went back to the town after a long walk, and met Lispenard wandering about.

"Have you seen my wife?" he asked.

"Good Lord!" said Trent to himself, mentally cursing his worldly fortune which had enabled him to lend Adele the money. "I saw her go off on the train," he added aloud.

"On the train!" Lispenard echoed, and gazed at his friend amazed. "Why should my wife go without a word to me?"

he asked, and sat down suddenly on the steps of the depot as if grown weak.

"I don't know," said Trent.

Lispenard stared into the plaza without a word, and Trent felt that it was due him to tell him all he knew, although it was breaking faith with Adele. "She asked me for a loan of five hundred dollars about a week ago. Of course I never thought it was for this. I thought she wanted it for you and the children."

His companion raised his head slowly and looked up at the balcony with a smile of amusement and contempt. "Haydon is above there listening to us." He called up to him. "Come down. I want to speak to you."

The station-master obeyed. The flickering light of the kerosene lamp at the door of the depot showed Lispenard's eyes cold and keen as he looked up at him. "Did you know Mrs. Lispenard was going away?"

"Well, she kind of took me into her confidence," answered Haydon; "you see, I was to see her trunk went all right. I got it down after dark last night, and——"

"That will do," said Lispenard with a gesture as though the conversation sickened him. Trent saw that he controlled himself with an effort, and forced himself to continue the conversation with the man.

" Keep whatever she told you to yourself. A lady's confidence is sacred," with an effort at lightness, " and remember that I trust you as one gentleman trusts another, Haydon." He rose slowly.

He did not seem to see Trent's proffered hand. He held his walking-stick by either end in his own hands.

" Good-night," he said, with a nod which included both men impartially, and Trent felt as if he had been struck. He watched the grey-clad, youthful figure, the moonlight falling aslant the white sombrero; he caught the poise of the head held high from pride, but resting back as if heavy from learning. He was doomed to feel again all the old sick, angry resentment at Adele's unfaithfulness, but this time it was for the sake of another man, not for himself.

It was not until he reached his own gate that Lispenard remembered his sons. Well, he would tell them that their mother had stolen away on a visit, and they must try to be as content as they could with him until she came back. At first he could not realise she was gone, and he sat down in a house unnaturally still.

The events of the past ten days kept coming back to him. Now through the memory of his happiness in his wife's recent newborn content he heard sounding the note of her departure. He remembered that he had not noticed whether the boys had come in yet

and gone to bed. He went to their room. The little white bed was undisturbed. The pillows stood up primly. The shams had not been folded away for the night, nor the counterpane turned back. He wondered that he could have thought even for a moment that she would have gone without Jim and Tiggy. Their absence did not change the situation, but only increased the loneliness. He was sure she must have left some message for him.

When he finally found a letter fastened to their pincushion on the bureau of their room, it seemed so typical of the situation that he could not resist smiling and caught the reflection of his amusement in the mirror. Poor little Adele! All desert life which could not conceal itself in the ground, nor feign appearance of sand or vegetation, must either fly or fight if it would exist. And Adele, to whom happiness meant existence, could not fight, so she had deceived him and run away! He experienced none of the anger toward her which had filled Trent. "The love of the adventure of life." It actuated them all. He read her letter as he stood there by the bureau. It was full of serene confidence that he would neither judge nor condemn her.

"I know you would have talked away my plans, dear Theodore," she wrote, "and so I did not tell you. When I have seen the boys well established with my brother, who has always been willing to pay for their

schooling, I will return." And she had added in a postscript:

"I do not know that we need feel much indebted to Jarvey for the money. After all, it was my father who gave him his start in life. But of course it was lovely of Jarvey to give it to me."

It was so feminine to Lispenard that when she saw no way of returning the money she had borrowed, she should seek an easy way out of her difficulty. He folded the little note and placed it in the drawer of the bureau. He would have to find some way to pay Trent back. He returned to the living room, where he had lighted the lamp, and looked about him. Even the light could not make the room seem aught but gloomy. He thought of the other rooms in the house, yawning darkly, and realised his own sensations with interest and appreciation. He saw how it was that imaginative men had summoned ghosts up in deserted houses. Already his own abode was acquiring a personality that creaked and whispered.

## CHAPTER X

TRENT would gladly have left town the next day as he had originally planned, but he was too much a man of the world not to fear the interpretation his immediate departure might put on Mrs. Lispenard's flight. For the first time he went voluntarily and alone to call on Miss Armes, craving society other than Haydon's in his desolate mood. He had not seen Lispenard all day, and it was a disheartening experience to him to pass by the small house across the street nestling in the shadow of the old mission. Santa Ines was bathed in the light of sunset, and he recalled Theodore's words, that it was like a gracious presence in Sahuaro. Peace seemed to hover over it like the wings of an invisible dove ever ready to descend upon that person, who, in passing, paused to receive it. And legends, like birds, fluttered about it, their charm not to be caught in the printed page; legends of the Jesuit fathers and the pious Indians who had built the mission with fearful toil and tribulation. Trent had already heard several of them; they were the folk-lore of the people of Sahuaro. The bronze bells continued to hold their music like a very old person in whom the spirit remained sweet. Trent wondered as he walked on at the purely artistic pleas-

ure to be gained from a building in absolute harmony with the landscape.

He caught no glimpse of Lispenard, although his front door was open and he knew he must be within. The hurt of last night still lingered, and that experience made him feel that he might be misunderstood, and his call taken to be either as one of curiosity or condolence. To be misunderstood by Theodore! It was incredible. He was going to call on Miss Armes, driven there by sheer loneliness. He did not find her at home. Not even old brown Teresa came to the door. Life was informal in Sahuaro, and, if it were inconvenient to go to the door, people who called walked about the square and came back again. And when he rapped this evening the Señora Teresa was up in her room telling her rosary.

Trent retraced his steps to the plaza. The train had not yet come in, but the people had already gathered in that welcome spot of greenness; the steam was rising through the white cloth which covered the hot tamales for sale by the old Mexican woman; two young Spaniards strolled about smoking cigarettes; on the balcony above the young woman who ran the lunch counter stood ready to ring her big brass bell for supper. It was all so familiar to him now, so unchanged, and yet so absolutely changed since Adele's departure. He saw the chair which had been hers unoccupied, and he went on anxious to escape from the scene.

Without the plaza, and just beyond the railroad track, sat the row of Indian women, their blankets drawn over their heads up to their eyes, and their pottery placed in front of them for sale. He was about to go on when he was arrested by the upward glance of one very old woman, and he remembered being told by Haydon that she was famous in her tribe for her pottery. It was not the first time her bead-bright eyes had arrested his attention, and now it dawned upon him that she resented his indifference to her art.

With some amusement and real sympathy, he selected a vase exquisitely shaped, and paid her. His purchase he put behind a bunch of sage until he should return from his walk. He struck off straight into the desert, taking the trail which led to the mountains.

Far ahead of him he saw Miss Armes. As he drew nearer he saw that she was bareheaded; a pale pink shawl was gathered loosely around her shoulders, and her trailing skirt brushed an almost imperceptible cloud of sand. He saw her pause to pick a cactus blossom. In that vast desert she had the air of a lady walking in her own garden. He was somehow amazed at her, and she seemed possessed of great egotism.

"Have you come out to see the sunset?" he asked. "I have just been to call on you."

She turned, surprised. "I thought I was all alone. I often come out at this hour."

As they walked on he was conscious that it was the first time they had ever been alone together, and he felt that she was displeased. She was tall, but he looked with ease over her fair head; she was so delicate that it made him realise anew his own strength, and this made him experience a curious triumph. From the beginning of their acquaintance he knew she had disliked and defied him. Yet he had but to put out his arm and he could keep her there at his will. He looked over the wide desert, and he had a strange feeling as if he and she had drifted far out to sea.

They sat down on a shelving rock rising like a shoulder out of the sand. Back of them were some tall fluted cacti like broken Doric columns, and before them stretched the mesquite, silvery-green in the level light from the bright horizon. The air was being woven into crêpe-like veils of pink and blue above the mountain peaks.

They heard the shrill scream of the Overland, and turned to see it rush like some black monster into the landscape, curving to its track and revealing its great length; puffing into the station and shutting out their view of the plaza. They saw the engine uncoupled and driven off to the big red water-tank, and finally taken back.

Trent watched it depart and fade to a black speck

in the distance with a feeling of poignant sadness as he realised how soon it would bear him away. He had been eager to go that morning, but now he was reluctant, and he was scornful of his own weakness in wishing to remain sentimentally in a place merely because Adele had been there.

He turned suddenly, startled to find that he had so far forgotten the conventionalities of life that he had not spoken to Miss Armes for some time. It seemed impossible that she should not resent it, and yet he had not been unconscious of her presence beside him. He glanced down at her serene profile, her hands clasped lightly about her knee, and realised that she had evidently forgotten him as well.

"Mrs. Lispenard will not reach her destination until day after to-morrow," she remarked.

"Then you know where she is going," he said in some surprise, wondering if she had seen Lispenard since last night.

"Oh, I knew," she answered.

"Did she tell you?" he asked in an amazement he took no pains to conceal. Could she have connived with Adele in this impulsive departure? He remembered the girl's infatuation for Lispenard, and looked at her sternly.

"No, indeed," she told him. "It was Tiggy. That is, the child came to beg me to do something for him while he was gone away. He told me his mother

wished him to keep it secret. I knew as well as if I had been told where she was going. She has been anxious for a long time to put Jim in school."

He knew that she must wonder where Mrs. Lispenard had obtained the money.

"Do you see how the sunset shadows are falling to-night?" she asked him, and he saw that she wished to discontinue the subject. "Do you see how the top of that third mountain is worn into points by the winds and sand-storms, and how the front of it is fluted? I please myself by thinking it is a great organ, and the wind is the musician."

"You love music," he said, noting her expression.

"Have I never played for you?" she rejoined. "Why, you have never been in but one room in my house, have you? I have my piano in the parlour, where my father's picture is." She added after a moment, "He was killed by the Indians."

"So Mr. Lispenard told me," he said.

"Yes," she said. "He admired my father. If it had not been for him I should not have gotten over it, ever, I think. They would not tell me how bad it was, and I imagined it, which was worse, I think. But Mr. Lispenard made me see how my father must have been happier to die fighting than to die in his bed after a lingering illness had broken his spirit. I shall never forget how he insisted that his soul must have sprung forth armed with victory

from his poor body." She shivered. "They never let me see him—afterwards. But I am glad now to think that his spirit was never discouraged by a sickness that would have been unendurable to him."

He was impressed anew by her intellectuality. Most women would have refused to accept such comfort, he thought.

And Theodore who had given it to her! He looked away. "You love him," he said; "you love Lispenard." He could not have explained why his own heart was beating so heavily, and there was a moment of darkness to his eyes. His ill-advised speech echoed in his own ears and made him ashamed. What right had he to accuse this woman and bring her to confusion? The words had spoken themselves almost without his will.

She made no reply.

He saw her looking straight ahead of her, unaltered, as if she had not heard his brutal words. The afterglow, bright as a second sunset, spread over the dun desert and turned her ash-coloured hair to gold. For one confused moment it seemed to him that the air, weaving such magical veils, had woven one about her, and that he saw her through an illusion. He had expected to look into the face of a woman his unpardonable words had humiliated. He saw a countenance of touching fairness, too calm to be triumphant. He had accused her of loving Lispenard. Now, with

a sinking of his spirit, he read her smile. It was Lispenard who loved her.

Adele's words returned to him like a prophecy:

"If you learn to like the desert you will like her. You cannot see what I mean now, but you will if you stay long enough." A veil was torn from his eyes. In her own person she typified the desert, fair to those who found her fair, strange to those who found her strange. Her beauty was a reflection like that of the little indigo chameleon which played over her white fingers that day in the shadow of the rock. Then her eyes, too, had been deep blue. He looked down into them now, and saw them shadowed, of no distinct colour, and full of mystery. The sands were bright, and her hair was gold in the afterglow. Did he not know that in reality those sparkling sands were dull and lifeless; that the soft masses of her hair were neither brown nor yellow, but a monotonous ash-tint? She cast a spell upon him as the desert had, and forced him to admit the strange beauty of them both. A fever seized his blood. To Adele he had been all tender chivalry, but now he reached out and took hold of the hand of the girl beside him as if he would draw her nearer.

She struggled to withdraw her hand from his, and he saw that she was frightened. He released her gently. He did not know himself. She let her hand rest where he had dropped it between them, and he

was touched. It was almost acquiescent of her, as if she were willing he should take it again. But he knew it was only indicative of that extreme gentleness which he had observed in her from the first. He had thought then she showed it only to Lispenard, but now he too felt it. His heart throbbed heavily.

"You are a strange woman," he said. "Why did you come out here at this hour?"

"If I told you you would not believe me," she said. "Once I told you I had seen Tiggy's wolf, and you laughed at me."

He smiled now. She was very clever to turn his question off by such a reference. Her air of youthfulness disarmed him, and he was ashamed of his cynicism. She was quite composed again, and he wondered if it were the quick trustfulness of youth which had put her at her ease so soon, or that deep maturity which told her that she was mistress of the situation.

But he was wearied guessing the way of women; he was tired and depressed, and he looked away from her to the shadows which made the mountain look like a mighty organ. He wished, fancifully, that a wind might arise and fill those imaginary pipes with music in harmony with his mood, wild and fierce and lonely. He could have laughed with scorn to think Lispenard had said the desert breathed peace. With all its evanescent beauty of sunset it had never seemed as hateful

to him as now. His dark head sprinkled with grey was massive in that fairy light; his mouth was set and his eyes were gloomy. His feverish unhappiness over Adele's desertion and Lispenard's coldness made him reckless. He looked at his companion and thought that she was not all remote and classical, but had great sweetness as a woman. He wished he had a wife, young and fair and honest. His hand dropped to hers and closed over it tightly one brief moment, then he released it. Her colour rose bright.

"Shall I tell you what I have been watching all the time we have been sitting here?" she asked him. "Quick, over there, look! There, now you see him."

Had it not moved he could not have distinguished that shaggy grey form which slipped along those shining sands, following the trail that led to the mountains.

She gave vent to a little sigh after the moment's excitement of making him see it. "It is Tiggy's wolf," she said.

He saw that the animal trotted unevenly, lunging forward, and he recalled her statement that one of its fore-paws was gone.

"I promised Tiggy I would bring food out to it while he was away," she told him, "but he wished me to keep it a secret."

"I will not mention it," he said.

"I miss the children," she continued, "and I know they will be homesick."

"And do you not miss Mrs. Lispenard?" he asked, angry with her as he had been that day on the mountain when neither she nor Lispenard had mentioned Adele's name nor been regretful of her absence.

Miss Armes did not look at him, but her manner told him he had at last gone too far. She gathered up her soft, pale shawl and rose. He walked along in silence at her side. The desolation of the desert through that sunset veil of beauty was forced upon his soul. And that pale averted profile in all its perfection—that, too, seemed desolate. He thought of Adele so far away, of his life in the East, and these realities of his existence seemed to become unsubstantial. The cold profile at his side angered him. He remembered that look in Lispenard's eyes—that look of a man inviolably wedded to a secret passion. What right had she to be scornful of him?

He put his hand on her shoulder and made her face him. "You shall not turn away from me, too," he cried in a voice he did not recognise as his own. "Lispenard shall not have everything!"

She slipped from his grasp and ran, wild and delicate in that strange atmosphere, her pale pink shawl falling from her and lying on the yellow sands. He stood still, watching her fleeing figure. No longer did he wish to follow her. And Adele's words kept

saying themselves over and over. "Oh, you will think her beautiful if you stay long enough, Jarvey."

He picked up the shawl and went back to the rock. He thought of Adele's little child bringing out supper to the wolf at night, of his strange double separation from Adele, for she was no longer with her husband and in honour he could not see her. He realised afresh the strange fever that was coursing in his blood; a pale pink shawl lay across his knee; the fountains were stirred within him, and he found himself, a man past thirty-five, alone in a desert, his eyes full of tears.

When it was long past darkness he went home. As he drew near the plaza he remembered the vase he had bought, and looked for it back of the bunch of sage near the railroad track. It was gone, and his fingers struck instead a hard object wrapped in a bit of paper. It was the dollar he had paid the old squaw. He was amazed. Had she resented his careless fashion of leaving his purchase? Was it possible she valued her work for its own sake? But why should not the fingers that fashioned it love it? He recalled the exquisite shape of the vase, that shape which had imprisoned the form of beauty since Eve was born. He laughed bitterly. His dreams were over. Adele had chosen another; he could still see that other figure fleeing from him, wild and delicate in a strange atmosphere, her pale pink shawl

slipping from her and lying on the yellow sands; and an old withered crone had taken back the vase of immortal shape. He flung the money scornfully away, and the breeze blew the paper in which it had been wrapped back against him.

## CHAPTER XI

LISPENARD was obliged to wait until Cozzens should return from the Capital, where he had gone on business, before he could repay the sum his wife had borrowed. Meanwhile the embarrassment between the two men decreased, and he had Trent up to supper. He made the tea and put a variety of canned goods on the table.

"This is the tin-can country, you know," he said; "I don't want you to forget that. I have sometimes thought that fences of tin cans would be appropriate to mark the border-line of the frontier."

He made no mention of his wife and children, and his guest wondered if he had yet heard from them. One thing was apparent to him, and that was Lispenard's real serenity. It was unforced. He could be reserved in regard to his wife's departure, but he could not hide from his friend that he was content; and it seemed to poor Trent, who would have valued her so, that Adele's sweetness had been wasted on this man.

Thoughts of a divorce crossed his mind, and he had a moment of dizziness at a final possibility of giving to her what she had missed of life. Lispenard turned the leaf of the book he was reading aloud after their supper, glancing up with some relative remark as he did so. And Trent, as he looked at that face, fine and

scholarly, bespeaking such mental vigour, such physical delicacy, realised, almost with a sense of hopelessness, that he, Adele, Miss Armes, and Cozzens would all conspire to protect Lispenard against any mistake he might make.

They went down later for the mail. There were some business letters for Trent and one letter for Lispenard. He opened it eagerly, and his face paled as he glanced down the typewritten lines.

"Shall we go?" he asked. They had gone a square before he spoke again. "Do you remember how ambitious I was? I think I'm side-tracked. I thought I should be a bishop by this time, but the house of bishops would like to turn me out of the church as an heretic."

"Did you have bad news?" Trent asked, confident now that the letter could not have come from Adele. He drew a deep breath of relief. He would be anxious until he heard she had reached her destination.

"Yes," said his companion briefly, "the publishers have refused my book. They are sending it back to me."

The street-lamp showed them Miss Armes walking ahead alone.

"What a solitary woman she is," said Trent; "I do not understand her." His tone was indifferent. He had schooled himself to sternness, and the passion and fever of the night before seemed like a dream. He had

returned her shawl that morning, but had not asked to see her when he called.

"Solitary?" Lispenard repeated; "I should not call her that. She is very happy. I have sometimes thought, though, that happiness sets us a little aloof from our fellows. After childhood is done any real happiness is so rare that we are apt to hug it to our hearts like a precious secret, fearing either the world's enmity or else its condemnation of us as foolish. But we are eager to share our sorrows. For instance, I could scarcely wait to get out of the post-office in my anxiety to tell you my manuscript was rejected."

"And do you mean to imply that you wouldn't have told me had it been accepted," his friend retorted. "No, Theodore, you cannot make me believe you are cynical. You would have been setting up the cigars if you'd had good luck."

"I was only talking," Lispenard answered, with his charming smile, as they crossed the street where the lamp-post was. "Like all people who talk much, I must say foolish things and often contradict myself. Your words always had more weight than mine because you talked less. The current of your mind is too strong to let you drift in and out along the shore as I do. Miss Armes, it isn't gracious of you to quicken your steps when you hear us coming behind you. If you try to avoid your spiritual adviser it indicates that you have a guilty conscience."

They were quite a way beyond the lamp-post now, and her face was barely distinguishable as she turned, and Trent felt rather than caught the glance of her eyes. It was one of shyness, not of displeasure, and, in spite of his stern resolves, his heart bounded.

"I forget you are a pastor half the time since you don't wear the dress ordinarily, Theodore," he said, laughing.

Miss Armes walked on the other side of Lispenard, a little in front of him, a slender figure, dim in the shadow of the magnolia and pepper trees bordering the adobe wall of her garden. But Trent caught the poise of her head carried slightly forward on her delicate throat and turned toward him; he even distinguished the hand which gathered and lifted her skirt at the side; and he caught a scent of roses.

"I won't wear the cloth and be tagged as the professional good man among my fellows," Lispenard answered, but his friend scarcely heard his words.

They had only a little way to go together, half the length of her grounds. A light shone out from the rose-arbour as they drew near the gate.

"How mysterious!" she said, quickening her steps.

The old Señora Teresa was hunting for something with a candle.

"What is it, Teresa," asked her mistress, "what have you lost?"

There was no answer, nor did she look up.

"She does not hear us," said Miss Armes; "she is getting very deaf."

They lingered, held by the picture Teresa made, her grotesque shadow moving up and down on the rose vines, her wrinkled brown face distinct in the closely held candle.

"You may depend upon it, it's money she's lost," Trent remarked in a lowered tone, "or she wouldn't have that look of avidity."

"Old women give me much more of a sensation than old men do," said Lispenard. "Who was ever scared at the thought of a wizard? You can't even get up enough interest in one to imagine him riding a broomstick. But you can picture your hag flying along the clouds on an evil night. There, she's found it. No, she hasn't, either. It was something she mistook for whatever she's lost."

Miss Armes stood slightly nearer the gate than the two men, and her face was distinct to Trent. He felt the fascination of last night creeping over him again. Had she, indeed, fled from him, and now stood so close that he could touch her by putting out his hand? As if she divined his thought, she lifted her eyes and gave him a look cold and implacable.

"There, she's found it," said Lispenard. "I'm so relieved! I was afraid she wouldn't."

They watched her straighten her back slowly and blow out the candle. She did not see her mistress, who

stepped back as she came out of the gate, but she nearly ran into the two men, and crossing herself and mumbling, hurried on.

"I don't suppose she really saw you then, she was so absorbed," Miss Armes said, looking after her, "but instinct made her cross herself. If she hadn't been with me so long I wouldn't keep her, she is so hard to manage, yet only a few years ago she was very companionable, and used to sit in the court with me afternoons and embroider and tell me of the times when she was young. Now she likes to stay alone in her own room."

"I remember how interesting she could be, poor soul," said Lispenard. "I could enjoy her now, if I didn't get so exhausted shouting at her when we talk."

"It isn't old age," she continued, "it's because she's grown miserly, and I fancy she buries her money in Santa Ines. It is terrible, I know, but I quite anticipate telling Jim, when the poor soul is gathered to her fathers, that there is hidden treasure in Santa Ines. Won't he have excitement trying to find it!"

They lingered but a moment or two longer, for all three had been made self-conscious and constrained by Adele's flight, and then she said good-night and went in.

The two men walked silently across the street, and then turned down towards Lispenard's home.

"Do you think I've side-tracked myself, old fellow?" he asked again. His tone was pitiful. It was the voice of one who could not endure the doubt his question implied.

"No," said Trent. His pulses beat triumphantly. She could give him that cold, implacable look if she so wished, but he had seen her shyness and softness when she fancied the deep shadow of the trees veiled her from his observation. He drew himself together. Was the experience of last night to be repeated? And how was he answering his friend? "I beg your pardon, Theodore, I was thinking of something else. You're right. You are side-tracked here. Why don't you leave it all? Adele would be happier."

It was the first time her name had been mentioned between them, but now it was done so naturally and simply as to engender no embarrassment. It stilled Trent's pulses; it steadied him. The one moment of disillusion when she spoke of having marred his life, and he, in his own conceit, had condemned her vanity, was past, absorbed in his loyal affection for her. However another woman might fascinate him, it was she whom he loved, Adele, the little girl he had known in his boyhood; the girl who had given him the purest happiness of his life, brief though that happiness was; the woman who had sweetened his faith in humanity by being an ideal wife and mother. His irritation with her was gone, and he saw that her folly in

running away from her husband was due to excess of love in which the mother triumphed over the wife.

"Adele would be happier," he repeated.

Lispenard shivered as if struck with sudden cold, and made no reply. He would not leave the desert. Trent knew that. But it was not that alone which held him.

"Theodore, it was never our habit to say much to each other, but this time I'm going to. You're right. You're side-tracked out here. It's time for you to break away. I know you love the life, but it's time for you to go. I don't care what passion a man cherishes. If it interferes with his career, if it checks his ambition, it becomes the canker which ruins his life."

"I wonder why you never married," said Lispenard. "You would have been happy with an intellectual woman. She would have understood your ambition."

"I abhor an intellectual woman," he retorted.

Lispenard frowned wearily. "Why make a question of sex? It is stupid of you." They had reached his door, and he unlocked it, hesitating a moment before entering. "How dark it looks!"

Trent insisted upon hearing some of his friend's writings, and Lispenard recovered his spirits in the warmth of the other's interest, which threw him into his most delightful mood. The ideals of their youth

flowered again out of those closely written pages. He became touchingly happy.

"You've no idea, Jarvey, how I've longed for a man's judgment. A woman's may be full as intellectual, but she is apt to be biassed by her liking, I think. Don't you know I was never very fond of women's society as such, and since I've been in the ministry I've been suffocated by a lot of petticoats."

He would not let his friend return to the plaza that night, but kept him with him. "You can have the boys' room, and I will have breakfast whenever you like. It will be like our college days."

Trent saw that he did not wish to be alone. The man was sensitive, very delicate, and more dependent upon love than he knew. Like most people of great charm of personality he did not realise what he received.

## CHAPTER XII

AFTER breakfast the next morning Trent went back to the depot to write some letters, and his host accompanied him part of the way to the plaza. At the bank building he left him. The open windows above showed him that Cozzens had returned. He found him at his desk in his shirt-sleeves, a big black cigar in his mouth, and his hat on the back of his head. He was dictating a letter to his stenographer.

"Any hurry?" he asked.

"None at all," Lispenard answered, as he seated himself at the window. The little town was charming, so bright-hued, so gay. Never had it seemed more attractive nor his own mood one of greater tranquillity. Trent's sympathy and admiration for his book had been encouraging, and he was able to accept cheerfully the fact that he must send it out again. His only impatience was due to the time it took to send a manuscript back and forth across the continent. Life seemed so full of interest and incident that he was indifferent to his wife's absence. With a woman's greater power of agonising over small things, she had probably felt the spiritual need of separation from him for a time. He did not take seriously her state-

ment that she was going for the sake of the two boys. He thought it was because he had become oppressive to her, and he accepted this belief impersonally and was not wounded. It was not in her nature to combat him, and so she had fled; that was the only refuge her nature offered. His keenest emotion had been his mortification when he discovered she had asked his friend for the money to go. The interest excited by her sudden departure had already died away. Sahuaro accepted easily his statement that she had gone East on a visit to her brother, and had some thought of putting the boys in school. It was a proverb in Western life that men could live down homesickness, but that women never could, and must be allowed to go back East occasionally if it could be afforded. Mrs. Lispenard was a brave woman to have remained as long as she had. The Woman's Auxiliary of her husband's church was a little offended that she had not allowed a farewell party in her honour, and curious as to where the money had come from, but had finally settled down to the opinion that her brother must have sent it. And as regarded her going so suddenly, had she not told Haydon that if she had allowed herself to say good-bye to anyone her courage would have failed her, and she never could have started? They gathered, too, that it was for this reason she had not wished her husband to see her off on the train. He was relieved to think there had been no gossip, and now he dis-

missed the subject from his mind with a sigh of relief, and took up the small morning paper.

Cozzens finished the letter he was dictating.

" Vamose, you," he told the stenographer, and the young man hurried into the outside office, and closed the door between.

Cozzens listened to what Lispenard told him, his eyes narrowing like a cat's, his left hand jingling nervously the loose coin in his trousers pocket. When he finished he brought his fist down heavily on the desk.

" So your wife's left you," he said.

" Temporarily, temporarily," Lispenard modified, amused at his own words, which echoed in his ears like " gently, gently " on a Sunday-school card.

" The damned scoundrel! " cried Cozzens.

" My dear fellow, don't blame Trent. I know perfectly well that Mrs. Lispenard talked him into doing as she said. Why, he was once in love with her. Make some allowance for the tender passion, and that the memory of it might engender some feeling of gallantry. He and you are my best friends, but I've no wish to be indebted to him for money loaned my wife, and so I've come to see if you can help me out. I want you to take that paid-up insurance of mine. The policy is good for seven hundred dollars. I'll make it over to you for five hundred dollars in cash. It will be security if I shouldn't be able to pay you back, and

the two hundred dollars would be the interest." He leant forward in his chair, and put his hand on his friend's big shoulder. "Joking aside, you'll do me this favour, won't you? I shan't know where to turn if you don't. And I wouldn't ask Mrs. Lispenard's brother for a cent, the confounded saving prig!"

Cozzens dipped his pen in the ink-well, and wrote out a cheque on orange-coloured paper and laid it one side to dry.

Lispenard drew the policy from his shabby grey coat and made it over to Cozzens. "We shall have to have witnesses," he insisted, smiling. "I've always been longing to convince you that a clergyman can have a sense of business."

Cozzens called in his stenographer, and when the young fellow had signed and gone out again, he said, "This leaves your wife without anything in case you die."

"How sharp are the wounds of a friend," his companion retorted; "you forget I may have a whole silver mine in my book."

Cozzens put on his coat and settled his hat square on his head. Then he picked up the cheque. "You stay here," he said briefly. "I'll just take this here to him. Don't worry. I'll get his receipt in full or know the reason why."

"Good Heavens!" cried Lispenard, springing to his feet. "Come back here. You can't insult my

friend. Why, he's just passed the night with me. Give me that cheque. I'll take it over myself."

The big fellow demurred, but it ended in Lispenard having his way.

"However you put it," Cozzens insisted obstinately, "it looks just one way to me, and that's dirty. I call it a regular Greaser trick for a man to give a woman money to run away from her husband and children."

"She took them with her," Lispenard explained.

"Hey!" he cried, his eyes bulging.

"She has some idea of putting them in school near their uncle," the other continued.

"I guess she aint calculating much on the education you and I had laid out to give them," Cozzens said huskily, with a faint smile; his fierceness was gone.

"I think not," his friend answered, amused to think how little his wife respected his intellectual judgment in regard to their sons. He took up the slip of glossy orange paper bearing the sprawling signature of the great mine owner, and went away.

Cozzens squared his chair around and watched through the window for Lispenard to emerge from the stairway below. His eyes followed that almost boyish figure until it disappeared in the green of the plaza. He reached back in his hip-pocket and drew out a whiskey-flask. His full, hard eyes were misty.

"I'd even taught Jim to take a nippy now and

then," he muttered. "Let a boy know the taste when he's young and he'll never go crazy for it when he grows up." He put the flask to his lips and then turned back to his work. Now and then a heavy sigh shook his powerful shoulders as he went over his accounts. On the desk was a piece of gold quartz he had brought home for Jim and an Indian toy for Tiggy.

Trent had finished his letters, and was sitting leisurely on the balcony, looking out over the desert, which like the sea was forever changing. He was embarrassed when his friend brought up the cheque.

"Another time would have been just as convenient to me."

"That's all right," answered Lispenard; "don't speak of it. I appreciate your goodness in giving it to Adele. Women are more innocent even than ministers when it comes to the propriety of money matters. The air is full of dust to-day. We ought to have a magnificent sunset. I am apt to forget the time in between. It often seems all dawn and evening to me here."

Trent smiled in sympathy as he opened his leather pocket case to lay the cheque within. As he did so he noticed the signature, and was wounded beyond measure, as he was not even when his friend had refused to see his extended hand the night his wife went away. That was due to the strain and humiliation of her unexplained departure, but this was deliberate. Lispen-

ard preferred to be indebted to Cozzens rather than to himself. This incident took all pleasure from his day. He had planned to spend one more evening in Sahuaro. Now, he decided to go that night and not wait for the morning train.

Lispenard felt the change in him, and was at a loss to account for it. The need of explaining Cozzens's signature to the cheque never crossed his mind. The quicker he was done with any money matter, the better he was pleased. He saw that his friend's eyes had grown cold and his manner haughty, and ransacked his memory as to any probable cause. Finally he attributed it to sheer moodiness, and remembered that there had always been a dour streak in Trent's make-up. He tried in vain to persuade him to remain a few days longer, and, when he could not, gave up further urging with entire sweetness and made up his mind to enjoy that last day to the full. He remained to lunch with him and stayed in his room while he packed. At four o'clock he proposed that Trent should call on Miss Armes and bid her farewell.

He complied without the least emotion. His only feeling was one of weariness and anxiety to leave Sahuaro as soon as he could. Lispenard's action in regard to the money was fatal to their friendship. He felt that he could never get over it. He would not have believed before this incident occurred that Lispenard could be so little sensitive to his friend's feelings.

The desert had estranged him indeed, and he understood as he had not before why Adele had gone away.

They found Miss Armes at home. The front door was open, and they heard her playing Handel's Largo at the piano in the parlour. She turned her head over her shoulder, her fingers on the keys. Then she rose and went to meet them. "I thought I heard someone."

"Don't stop," said Trent; "I wish you would play again for me."

He remembered afterward that it was the first request he made of her, and that she had acceded to it.

Lispenard, who cared nothing for music, wandered about the room, and finally found a book that he liked and sat down at the window.

The music sublimated Trent's melancholy mood; the soft notes fell gently on his bruised spirit. His feeling toward Lispenard did not alter, nor was he less sad, but his weariness passed and left him serene. He was not surprised by the girl's exquisite touch, but conscious only that she played on as though her mood that afternoon were all music. He had never been in this particular room before. The curtains were drawn against the blazing sunshine, save where Lispenard had seated himself, and there a dusty golden beam slipped in across his white hands and the book he held and lost itself in a revelation of the subdued colours in the rug on the floor. The bowl of roses on the piano

made the air fragrant, and Trent observed that they were placed just below the portrait of Major Armes which hung on the wall above the piano. The personality of the portrait dominated the room. The fierce eyes met his own; the uniform was worn with conscious pride; the set of the grey head was indescribably haughty. "A spirit armed and victorious!" What a genius Lispenard possessed in his ability to says always the appropriate and beautiful thing! It seemed impossible that this bronzed old war-eagle could have had a daughter as gentle, as white as the girl who sat now at the piano. The intellectuality of her perfect profile deprived it of that delicately sensuous beauty which was Adele's. His warmth of feeling for her was gone. His mood of triumph, his almost boyish desire to make her speak to him when he and Lispenard had overtaken her on their way home from the post-office, now seemed foolish to him. Her fingers lingered on the keys, the last notes died away, and she turned slowly around.

Lispenard closed his book. "Oh, music," he quoted, "'thou speakest to me of things which never were and never shall be.'"

"What a fraud you are!" she said; "you know you don't know one note from another."

"Leave me my harmless vanity," he retorted; "I wish to make a favourable appearance in this musical atmosphere. If I cannot hear music I can at least

talk it. I think that poetry speaks to me as music does to both of you. I say over and over to myself such a line as 'Bare ruined choirs where late the sweet bird sang,' with an emotion very different from any pleasure in the meaning of the words."

Trent rose. "I came to say good-bye, Miss Armes. I am leaving on this evening's train."

"I can't find the other volume of this book," said Lispenard, who was searching for it on the table, and did not observe that his friend had risen to go.

"It is in the library," she answered.

"I think I'll just go out and get it," he said. "There's never any time like the present for reading a good book."

Miss Armes and Trent were left alone.

"You are going sooner than you expected to, are you not?" she asked.

"I had to make the wrench some time," he said. "Sahuaro is setting a spell on me. I am sorry to go." He regarded her with his infrequent smile. He was grateful for her music and her magnanimity. In the presence of that fierce father on the wall whose bright, splendid eyes met his from out the painted canvas as though they were living, he felt that his words on the desert to her the other evening were unpardonable.

"Good-bye," he said. Her hand lay lightly in his a second, then his own fingers closed tightly over hers

and there was a moment of strangeness in which the room seemed to be charged with an emotion he could not comprehend, but which enveloped them both like an atmosphere. Lispenard's returning steps were heard in the hall, and the girl, still with her hand in Trent's, turned her face toward the door with such an expression of wistful longing that he never forgot it, for it showed him that she loved his friend. Their hands fell apart. He had a moment of pain, of hunger for that hour alone in the desert when she sat beside him and his hand had closed over her unresisting one. Oh, could he but hold her so from Lispenard! His jealous gaze saw her colour rise, her lashes flutter as his friend entered the room, and he turned from her with sudden aversion. She was a sorceress as the desert was a sorceress; all sweet invitation, all withdrawal; a mirage that beckoned and vanished!

"I found it," said Lispenard. "What, going so soon, Trent?"

"It is nearly five o'clock," he answered.

Miss Armes went with them to the door. Trent as he closed the gate looked back and saw her the length of the rose-arbour from him, framed in the quaint arch of the adobe portico.

"Good-bye," he said again, raising his hat. She neither smiled nor bowed, and he went away with the feeling that her grave eyes still followed him. This final reserve showed him that she was still implacable.

Her magnanimity had after all been only another expression of her unfailing courtesy. He was glad to get away.

He and Lispenard had supper together at Campi's. Cozzens was there and dined alone. When he went out he nodded to Lispenard and gave Trent a stare meant to be insolent. Trent could have killed him, but he continued his conversation as though the incident had not occurred. At the close of the dinner the waiter brought a tray on which were two cigars and tiny glasses of fiery liqueur.

"With the compliments of Madame Campi," he informed them.

Haydon had spread the news of his guest's departure.

Trent was touched by the attention. He lighted his cigar, and found it excellent. It was Madame Campi's best. The two men sat nearly half an hour smoking and talking on impersonal matters, as if their visit were before them and not nearly past. When they finally went out Trent stopped to thank Madame Campi. He rather liked the hard-featured, handsome woman, with her showy jewelry and unending crocheting. She gave him a plump hand to shake.

"So, you will come back?" she said. It was the longest sentence he had ever heard her utter.

The sunset, as Lispenard had prophesied from the dust in the air that morning, was beautiful. They

watched it from the plaza. The frequenters of the depot began to collect, and it finally dawned upon Trent that the added excitement in the air was due to his departure. People with whom he had exchanged but a nod twice daily shook hands with him and told him to come back. He realised that they were sorry to see him go. Sahuaro was fond of him. He had been generous in his admiration, and they saw he was reluctant to leave, and knew he had enjoyed himself. That was the fact which had won them. They liked to see newcomers enjoy themselves. It was the finest tribute that could be paid their town. His figure, which a few weeks had made so familiar in the streets, would be missed. Haydon had told that he was a judge, and they liked to think he was a distinguished Easterner. A young Mexican with whom he had some slight acquaintance pressed a box of cigarettes upon him, and the station-master gave him the best of his paper-backed novels to read on the train.

Finally it was all over, and he found himself on the rear platform of the last car, as the great Overland pulled out of the station. The telegraph operator's girl was waving her handkerchief to him, and he smiled back at her, holding his hat in his hand, and conscious of a choking sensation in his throat. The last person he saw was Lispenard standing on the platform, forgetful of the vanishing train, his face turned toward the dying light on the desert.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

It was with a lift of spirits so strong as to be relief that he bought the new number of his favourite magazine and went into the reading room. He was going directly home. He had spent all his time in Sahuaro, and must give up the trip further west. But he would be glad to get back and resume his work again. He did not regret the last few weeks, but he was thankful they were over. He turned over the pages of the magazine, and found a paper written by a friend of his, a man who had made himself an authority in the law. His keen ambition, his sense of rivalry, infinitely removed in his self-respecting nature from anything like jealousy, was roused, and he read the article through carefully. It was not until he finished it that he looked out of the window and was brought back to a consciousness of the desert. A band of orange still held in the west. The evening was calm, there was no wind blowing, and the desert was quiet in a desolation which was never peace. Mountains rose and faded away. Cacti fled backwards, but always with their crooked arms stretched forward as they retreated. He had the same sinister impression of them as Adele had when she took her little sons and went away.

## CHAPTER XIII

LISPENARD, as he tore the leaf from his desk-calendar, was surprised to realise that his wife had been gone nearly a month. He had received a letter written immediately upon her arrival in the New England town in which her brother lived, and where she would remain until she had placed Jim and Tiggy in school. The boys would be day-pupils, and make their home with their uncle, who was willing to bear all expenses for the pleasure of having them with him. Meanwhile, she might stay on several months, unless her husband needed her. He answered at once, urging her to stay until she was really ready to come back, and letting her know, as delicately as possible, that he had paid back the five hundred dollars to Trent. He did not wish to mortify her by any undue reference to the matter, but he thought she would be relieved to know they were not indebted to his friend. He concluded the letter with all the current news, and told her that he would send her the Sahuaro *Courant* daily. He enclosed the cheque for his month's salary, begging her to use it for herself, and not to be concerned for him, as he had been well paid for his article on the desert flora. It was not until after he mailed the letter that he remembered he had for-

gotten to mention the boys once in it, and he was sorry for the omission, knowing it would hurt her. After the first chill of being alone in the house wore away he enjoyed an almost hermit-like existence. He sent his book on its rounds again, and he put all his energies into the writing of a second one he had long planned. The magazine which accepted his article on the flora ordered another paper from him, and this second cheque he invested in some books he had long wanted. When he undid the wrappings from them on their arrival he experienced a delightful sense of wickedness at the thought of Adele, that most practical, if wholly charming, wife. She had taken five hundred dollars and gone away on a good time. Should he not take his twenty-five that he had earned extra, and expend it in books, if he so wished? Let her scold him if she dare, after her own extravagance! It was surprising to find out on how little he could live. The house belonged to the church, and he had no rent to pay; his wardrobe was presentable, and he took but two meals a day, getting his own breakfast and having dinner at Campi's. He worked steadily all day, and did not go out until after five o'clock in the afternoon. He had never been happier nor felt in better health. It was his theory that a man who had learned the power of concentration did not get exhausted easily, and he, in fact, was never conscious of being mentally tired. As some women, even in illness,

never lose a certain bloom of colour, so his mind retained always a vital freshness, although his fingers might grow stiff and his back ache from the long hours spent at his desk. His church duties were few, and the services had long ago become such a routine to him that they were little responsibility. Except on Sunday he thus saw little of people. When Cozzens was in town they spent their evenings together, generally going on long walks. He showed a tact and worldliness scarcely to be expected in him in regard to Miss Armes, for he was prone to unconventionality. If they met on the street it was by chance, and he never went to call on her unless others were to be there.

The season was unusually hot and the desert looked bleached so that its white sands raised by the wind resembled a line of breakers in the distance; and the shadows seemed blacker by contrast and the moonlight almost greenish. The spring had passed with March; the several invalids who had swelled his congregation went away; during the middle of the day Sahuaro slept beneath its red-tiled roofs. But it was never so hot that he could not work, and he found the dry air stimulating, even exciting, with the prospect of recreation in the evening: the dinner at Campi's, with its pint of claret served without extra charge, the stroll in the plaza afterwards, and an exchange of remarks on the heat with Haydon, and sometimes a call on Miss Armes. She kept open house these hot evenings, and

received her callers in her stiff, picturesque garden, with its palms and magnolia and fig trees, and oranges ripening like gold balls in the warm dusk. There was the fountain, the splash of whose spray into the basin was sweeter than music in that desert country. It was here that her father used to walk up and down, up and down, on such evenings. Now she dragged out the old Señora Teresa, and made her wear her best black silk and lace mantle, and sit on the veranda the whole long evening—a deaf and most unwilling duenna. When Mrs. Lispenard was home she had not been needed, for Miss Armes never entertained nor had a caller without her friend. In spite of Adele's jealousy, the two women had been inseparable for years. There gathered about her several Spanish-Americans, of good family, young men of much polish and slight education, vicious as they were romantic, with an eye to her fortune beneath their gallantry. Lispenard began to remain away when he might have gone. Their frivolity wore on his nerves after his first philosophical resolve to understand them. He wondered that she could endure their shallowness. Cozzens growled and grumbled and scolded her to no avail, and established his substantial person on her veranda the evenings he was in town, and remained until all the other callers had departed. The fact that he had wished to marry her for years gave him a proprietary feeling in her, although she persist-

ently refused his suit. At last the suspicion crossed Lispenard's puzzled mind that she gathered these shallow young men about her to protect herself against him. The thought that she could think him so lacking in tact stung him. Contemptuous as he was of money, he thought he enjoyed in her eyes the reputation of a worldly man. He would be the last person to seek her in his wife's absence. This reflection disquieted him. It flung him into a kind of fever, and made him long to re-establish himself in her opinion. It effected his work, so that it became of uneven quality. He was thinking of all this late one afternoon, as he sat on his doorstep in the shade of Santa Ines, his hat on, his cane in his hand, preparatory to meeting Cozzens at Campi's. He wished he might see her once more in the old way, and for the first time he was impatient with Adele. Her going had closed the only doorway which he wished to enter, and deprived him of that intellectual sympathy on which he had so long depended.

The sunlight fell like gold on the crumbling yellow wall of Santa Ines. The vines Mrs. Lispenard had planted were withered for lack of water. As he sat looking at them, thinking he might have watered them himself, Miss Armes came into the range of his vision as she passed the corner of the old mission. She stopped at his gate.

"Don't get up," she said. "I am not coming in.

I only wanted to tell you I had a letter from Tiggy last night. It was very cunning. I have it here for you. Don't forget to give it back to me. I think he must be studying geography, for he addressed the letter to me as Yucatan Armes. He has probably convinced himself that my being named after the yucca is all nonsense, and that he has discovered my proper name."

"I don't doubt it," he answered, joining her at the gate. "He must think Yucca is a nickname, much as his own is. I've never been able to see how Mrs. Lispenard evolved Tiggy out of Theodore, although I've twisted my tongue a dozen different ways trying to see. It is a triumph of maternal love, I think, don't you?"

"I think she had better come home," she said; "she took all our good times with her. I've been going to the church sewing society religiously lately, and you've no idea how they all miss her."

She lingered at the gate, rested, and freshly dressed from her *siesta*. A breeze, cooler than they had known for some days, was rising as the day declined. It stirred her hair and blew pleasantly on his face.

"I had a letter from Trent," he said; "he wished to be remembered to you. He would have written sooner, but he was very busy."

"Why does Mr. Cozzens dislike him so?" she asked.

"Cozzens is apt to hold to violent prejudices as though they were the moral law with him," he answered. "Jarvis Trent is my best friend. I wish you could come in a moment and see some new books I have, but I will bring them over this evening if you are to be home. My conscience is burdened with the whole of the 'Arabian Nights.' You've no idea how guilty I feel. I foresee that, like Scheherezade, I am doomed to spend a few wakeful nights myself trying to invent some excuse to make to Mrs. Lispenard. I lay it all to the pernicious habit of reading publishers' catalogues. If I hadn't read the descriptions of this sumptuous edition I never would have bought it, for I didn't need it."

"I think that I shall have to write to Mrs. Lispenard," she said mischievously. "Oh, dear, I wish I could see her! Men never understand how it is that women depend so much on each other, do they?"

She looked away from him down the vista of the little street to where the far-off mountains rose magnificently as though to vie in splendour with the heated sunset.

It seemed to him, watching, that a shade was on her face, too wistful to be occasioned by the sentiment of her last remark. For several years his association with her had come to be the delicate delight of his intellectual life. Adele's going had severed this companionship, and he was saddened now by an instinctive feeling

that it would never be re-established. In his depression he could not imagine that Adele would really return, and all would be as it once had been.

The shadow passed from her face as he watched her, and he thought the expression that followed gave her beauty a look of immortality. So might a soul translated look, he fancied. She turned her gaze back to him, and it seemed to him that he read in her clear eyes both acceptance and regret of the situation which did not permit them to see each other freely.

She gathered up her trailing skirts to go. "If you will bring me over the 'Arabian Nights' to look at I will give you in return a bundle of papers and magazines. Come early, won't you? There are several coming, and we may have quite a party."

"I hope you have marked the articles you liked best, since we may no longer read them aloud together," he said.

She glanced back over her shoulder. "Do I need to mark them?" she asked, smiling.

He laughed. The coquetry of the remark was more like Adele than herself. She was right. They both missed Adele—child and woman both! He stood at his gate, watching her until she crossed the street and entered her own home, then went out himself, stepping in the opposite direction, swinging his walking-stick exultantly. The evening promised well. After dinner he and Cozzens would walk up to have their cigars

in her garden, and on his return home he would look over the papers and magazines she had laid aside for him. How well he knew what she would approve of, what she would discriminate against!

He stopped at the post-office in the rear of the drug-store to mail a letter to his wife in which he had made delightful confession of the "Arabian Nights," and then turned his steps toward Campi's.

As he reached the double screen doors he remembered how Trent had been delighted with the old-fashioned arctic and tropical scenes painted on either door. The room was fairly well filled. Cozzens was already there, and pounding on the table for "more juice."

Lispenard laughed, and took the seat opposite him at the small table. He broke off the crusty end of the loaf of French bread, and ate it slowly with a tumbler of claret from his pint pitcher. He was tired. Dinner was welcome, and Cozzens's buoyant physical presence a relief, but he missed Trent. It had been a rare treat to have a cultivated man for a companion once more.

Cozzens swallowed his food rapidly, and talked between courses in his husky, velvety voice. He had been having trouble at the mines with the men, and had settled the uprising himself without any advice from his overseers. He emphasised by gestures the scenes through which he had gone. When he spoke of his

foremen he brought his fist down on the table, and damned them outright for their presumption in thinking to reason with him.

Lispenard laughed. He recalled scenes when he himself had attempted to argue with his companion. "I think they were more rash than presumptuous," he said. He knew the great mine owner was ugly with his men, and drove them. But every attempt on his part to make Cozzens see how hard he was had been futile. He only succeeded in wounding him, for to differ from him on a matter in which he was an authority was treachery to his way of thinking. Did he not take unquestioningly the word of his friend on religious subjects, and was he not willing to fight to the death to prove Lispenard was right? This trouble had been delightful to him, and whetted his taste for more. The days had been growing tame. His full eyes narrowed; his jaw squared. He took for granted that his friend's courtesy implied his sympathy, and he continued talking on the subject as he mixed the lettuce salad for them both and flung in plentiful dashes of red pepper. Cozzens's salads invariably brought tears to all eyes but his own.

To their left, on the other side of the room, Lispenard observed a group of three Mexicans. He faced them while the back of his companion was toward them. It was some time since the three had finished dinner, but they lingered over their black coffee,

smoking cigarettes. One of them was a young woman. After a little he saw that the men's muttered remarks, and the girl's pert tosses of her black head, were directed toward his companion. Cozzens, turning around to swear after the waiter for bringing his coffee cold, was diverted from that intention as he saw the group behind him. One of the Mexicans was a fellow he had dismissed from his employ that week. He had been foremost in stirring up the trouble of which he had been telling Lispenard. He now gave the man an insolent stare, as if he had been a dog. Then he recognised in the woman a girl on whom he had once been sweet, and gave her a prodigious wink. She tittered in response.

With a snarling cry the Mexican leapt to his feet, his knife drawn.

"So," warned Madame Campi, watching from her desk.

Deliberately, yet more swiftly than it seemed possible for such a large man to move, Cozzens turned to the danger of that snarling cry as at the hiss of a rattlesnake, and without rising from his chair covered the man with his revolver.

A second passed thus, and ere it went everyone had disappeared from view with the exception of Lispenard, Madame Campi, who had not stirred, except to stop crocheting, and the two men at bay.

The Mexican, pinned like a butterfly against the

wall by that aim, turned a ghastly greenish hue, his eyes dull with fear, yet ominous and black with hatred. He had drawn a weapon first, and his enemy was free to fire in self-defence. Lispenard saw the hard jaw of the great mine owner settle, the full eyes narrow. Cozzens was taking a final, more deliberate aim. The blood rushed to Lispenard's head. He knew how hard this man had been.

He reached across the table and struck his arm up.

"My God, Cozzens," he cried, "you can't kill the fellow in cold blood!"

The revolver went off, and was followed by a splintering sound. The bullet had gone through the big gilt mirror at the end of the long room.

Before Cozzens, in his amazement, could take aim again, the Mexican sprang around the table, his knife raised. Lispenard, with a cry of agony, as he realised that his impulsive interference had put his friend in the power of his enemy, flung himself between the two men. With an instinctive remembrance of boyish fights with Jarvis Trent, he thrust his leg around the Mexican's, and with a twist flung him to the floor, and fell on top of him. The two rolled over and over, until they were stopped by a table. Lispenard felt a sting in his shoulder that was like fire. He wondered why Cozzens did not do something to help him, but even as the thought passed through his mind he was released.

The mine owner dragged the Mexican to his feet, and twisted his arm until he dropped the knife with a shriek.

"You damned dirty rattler," he said, slowly emphasising each word with a shaking, "I am going to let you go because Mr. Lispenard interfered, the same which he had no right to do, but I'm not going back on a friend, and if he seen fit to let you live, you varmint, live you do."

The man's companions crawled out from under the table where they had taken refuge. The girl was ashen and shaking, her pert prettiness gone. Campi, in his cook's cap and apron, came from the kitchen and helped Lispenard into a chair.

"You're not hurt, sir?" he asked.

"A trifle shaken," he answered.

Cozzens still held on to the Mexican, loath to let him go.

The silence which had fallen was scarcely less intense than the excitement had been. The waiter, who had fled into the street, opened the screen doors, and put his head in cautiously.

"Where are you, Carlota?" asked Cozzens.

The girl came around in front, shaking.

"Now, Carlota," he said huskily, "I want you to see that this fellow of yours goes off peaceable."

"Yes," she answered sullenly.

He fixed her with his powerful eye. "Here now, no

black looks, my girl. Give me a kiss to show it's all right."

All, except the writhing Mexican, grinned.

She hesitated, then put up her face, and Cozzens kissed her, with a wink at Lispenard, who sat leaning back in his chair, pale and smiling.

The woman coloured with relief and flattery. Her coquetry was appealed to. The impending tragedy had ended in a kiss from her. She dragged at her companion's arm, ashamed of him for being defeated, and the two went off, followed by the other man who had dined with them. As the painted screen doors swung behind the three, the Mexican, who up to that moment had maintained an ugly silence, began to talk.

Cozzens began to laugh. "He's all right now. Those Mexicans will sometimes take it all out in gabbling." He resumed his seat at the table. "Hi, you," he shouted to the waiter, "have you got that coffee hot yet?"

Lispenard had a burning sensation in his shoulder and side, but he was conscious of a great elation. There was a moment when he thought Cozzens was Trent down by the swimming-pool.

"I feel like a boy again," he said.

"So," warned Madame Campi again.

Cozzens looked across the table, staring. Then with a cry he was on his feet. "My God, the man's

dying!" He lifted Lispenard in his powerful arms and carried him out into the street, kicking open the screen doors with his foot.

"Stand away!" he shouted to the group of men about the step; "he wants air." He laid him down on the sidewalk, supporting his head and shoulders in his arms.

Madame Campi came hurrying out with a glass of brandy, and forced it between the white lips, holding the glass with one plump, steady hand while the other stroked his forehead.

"So, so," she murmured.

The tears were rolling down Cozzens's face. He tried to raise his friend into a more comfortable position, and Lispenard winced and opened his eyes. The brandy had revived him. Madame Campi removed the glass from his lips, and her hand from his forehead, but her watchful eyes did not leave his face. He struggled to rise. He was always humiliated by physical helplessness. With the help of Cozzens and Madame Campi he managed to get on his feet. Campi, white as his cook's cap and apron, brought out his hat and put it on his head.

"Thank you," he said, and then suddenly collapsed into Madame Campi's plump arms. She forced him to sit down on the doorstep.

"I'm too proud," he said, his eyes twinkling with his ready humour; "call the stage, Cozzens."

## CHAPTER XIV

THE wound in Lispenard's side proved to be an ugly one. The Mexican's knife had barely missed his heart, but the stab on his shoulder was little more than a scratch. Cozzens established himself in the house with him, and occupied Tiggy and Jim's room, rising early in the mornings to prepare breakfast. He was proud of the cup of coffee he could make, and the delicacy with which he could poach an egg and slip it from the boiling water on to a slice of toast without breaking it. It was not until he had made the invalid comfortable for the day, and seen him eat his breakfast, that he went out and had his own on the kitchen table. After breakfast the women in the neighbourhood took turns staying with Lispenard through the day, until he came home at night after an early dinner at Campi's, bringing his friend's supper on a tray. It distressed him that he was obliged to be at his office all day. Occasionally he sent up his stenographer to see how the invalid was doing. His anxiety was touched with pride at the fight Lispenard had made.

The time passed wearily for the sick man. His several nurses finally gave place to one. Most of the women who attended his church were hard-working,

with many duties, and could not well be spared from their homes, so the wife of the druggist, a prosperous and comfortable woman of middle life, took the responsibility of nursing him. She was a mother in Israel in his parish, and the president of the Women's Auxiliary League. Well, Lispenard had always been able to defy her, but, ill, she had him at her mercy, and served him with a sentiment not due to his personality, but to his profession. Her respect for her rector as such was unbounded, and he groaned inwardly when she tiptoed about his bed. In the morning she read a chapter from the Bible to him and in the afternoon the service and selection of psalms for the day. He could not enjoy the reading, as her voice was so monotonous. Now and then he heard Miss Armes enquire for him at the door. Old Teresa brought him over some delicacy every day, and several times his lunch, hot and well cooked. He wakened from a nap one afternoon, and asked Mrs. Burns to bring him a bundle of papers and magazines from his table.

She was unable to find them. "Can you think what you did with them, Mr. Lispenard?"

He frowned in the effort to think clearly. Then his face cleared. "Oh, I remember. I never got them. Never mind, Mrs. Burns." And he turned over on his pillow with a sigh.

His first request when they had gotten him into bed the evening of the stabbing was that Mrs. Lispen-

ard should not hear of it. He did not wish her visit spoiled. Fortunately he had mailed a letter to her only that afternoon, and she would not expect to hear again from him immediately. Still he thought it as well that in about a week Cozzens should write to Jim, and mention casually that his father was absorbed in his new book.

"My poor wife will be more convinced than ever that I'm a Jock o' Dreams if I seem to forget to write to her," he said, sighing a little when they had agreed upon this artful letter.

He found that reading continued into the afternoon gave him a nervous headache, and he was obliged to wait patiently through the longest hours of an invalid's day until Cozzens should come home. Through the half-open door of his bedroom he could hear Mrs. Burns singing a hymn as she sewed, or else gossiping with some crony who came in to spend the afternoon with her. Once he heard her refer to him as a lamb, and the remark flung him into a mood of nervous exasperation, although he was not without humourous appreciation of his own helpless rage. He insisted upon dismissing his physician after the first few days, and greeted smilingly the disturbed Cozzens, who came hurrying home from a meeting with the doctor on the street.

"I won't have him running up any more of a bill on me. Every visit means a book lacking on my

shelves that I might have afforded otherwise. Besides, I don't like him. I can't bear his clammy fingers poking about my ribs, and he is a Unitarian who never would support the church anyway, so I can afford to insult him."

"It seems to me you've changed a lot lately," said Cozzens drily.

"I have," Lispenard retorted serenely. "My blood's up now. I've been too meek."

Lispenard's old physician, a man who had settled in Sahuaro about the time they did, was abroad for a year with his family, and he had confided his practice to a young man who had come West for his health. In his heart Cozzens sympathised in his friend's aversion to the young man.

"He pulled you through, though, all right," he said gruffly.

"I don't care," said Lispenard, sitting up in bed to eat his supper, "he's a dolichocephalous blonde. What does he mean by having cold fingers! It's impudent of him in this glorious climate. And in a few days I'm going to send old Lady Burns kiting. With her the Woman's Auxiliary has done its worst!" He had not been in such high spirits since he was taken ill.

When it grew dark Cozzens brought in the lighted lamp and placed it on the bureau, and sat down by the side of the bed to read aloud. He had no eye for the printed page nor ear for subtle distinctions of pro-

nunciation, and Lispenard now and then corrected him. He generally accepted the suggestion, but sometimes he held obstinately to his own opinion. This evening he insisted upon calling "distance" "distant."

"Can't you hear any difference between distant and distance?" cried Lispenard.

"No," he answered, setting his jaw, "I can't. I was brought up to say 'distant,' like I seen the wolf in the distant."

"Distance," said Lispenard.

"Just the same," Cozzens asserted, "'distant.' The mountains look distant."

"There, that's right," cried Lispenard, relieved; "now how would you say, the mountains are some distance away?"

"Same," said Cozzens—"the mountains are some distant away."

They argued it back and forth until Lispenard collapsed on his pillow, white with irritation. Cozzens, alarmed, forced him to swallow a little port wine.

"You'll be the death of me!" Lispenard cried angrily, pushing his hand away. "I don't want that stuff. Can't you say distance? Distance—distant. Distant—distance. There, do you get it? Oh, Lord, don't talk about it any more. Sit down. Turn over to the next page. You've made me sick at my stomach."

And Cozzens, furious, but feeling the necessity of yielding to the sick man, sat down and resumed the reading.

Yet, during these days when he was confined to his bed, through all his pain, through all his nervous irritability, that exaltation, that spiritual rejuvenescence which came from his struggle in the restaurant, never left him. The man had risen above the timidity of the scholar. As he regained his strength he spoke much of this to his friend, of the sense of the adventure of life the incident had given him.

"I have learned a great lesson," he told him. "I shall force myself to be a man of action. I have been getting into a rut."

When he was able he wrote a letter to his wife in which he made no mention of his wound, but wrote a couple of pages on the adventure of life. The phrase pleased him, and he recalled how Trent had spoken of it to him on that first evening of his arrival in Sahuaro. He had never answered his letter; and he now did so, writing the details of the affray to him, knowing that he would be interested.

When he was able to go about, Cozzens went to the mines, to be gone a week. He had insisted that a young Mexican who went to Lispenard's church should stay with him nights. Mrs. Burns continued to come in every day to clean up a bit, as she expressed it, and to visit with him a while.

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

When he was strong enough he went to call on Miss Armes one afternoon, privileged by his character of invalid. She sent word down to him that she was just rising from her *siesta*, and that if he would wait until she was dressed she would be down in a little while.

It was such a hot, dusty day that he felt tired from the short walk to her gate, and was grateful for the shade of the garden into which he looked through the arching adobe columns of the corridor. He wished he might see Major Armes taking his accustomed walk up and down the path in front of the graceful fountain. The perfume of flowers was heavy in the air; the blue sky showing through the dark green of the magnolias made him dream; the foliage of some of the trees hid fruit that gleamed jewel-like. He recalled the fairy tale of which Trent had once spoken, the miller's daughter whose hands were cut off by the Evil One, and who ate the fruit from the trees with her mouth until the king made her silver hands. His sense of beauty was satisfied. The green and blooming life of the garden seemed part of his own rejuvenescence. He sat thinking of gardens, his delicate half-smile on his lips.

"The Lady of the Garden," he said when he rose to greet his hostess.

"I had expected to see you looking ill," she answered.

"I am younger by twenty-five years," he said; "that fight in Campi's took me back to my boyhood."

It seemed a long time since he had said good-bye to her at his gate that evening.

"Did you come for those papers and magazines?" she asked, divining his thought. "I have saved them."

"No," he answered, "I came for a cup of tea. I have come to the conclusion that it takes a lady to brew a cup of tea. It should be fragrant, should it not? Mrs. Burns would make it too strong, and since I get my own lunches it doesn't taste right."

"After such flattery I will go in and make it myself," she said. She brought out a nest of Chinese tea-tables and her work-bag, and a new magazine which had come the night before. "I will make the tea the last thing," she told him, "so as to have it just right. I feel that my reputation is at stake."

While she was gone on this mission he looked over the magazine and found an article to read aloud. The afternoon was one of serenity and charm. After the tea, which was all that he could have desired it to be, she took up her embroidery, and he read the article he had selected. At last they drifted into conversation, but he did not speak of his own new spiritual experience, the new birth he felt within himself. He could mention it to Cozzens, but to tell her would have been sentimental, if not absolutely mawkish.

His love of beauty, which the garden satisfied, deep-

ened as he looked at her, and as he had often felt bathed by the desert sunshine, so now his whole being seemed permeated with the warmth and light of her beauty. Her face fascinated him anew after his long deprivation; he loved to compare her to the desert. This comparison he kept jealously to himself, and had never mentioned it except once to Cozzens.

"What have you been doing since I last saw you?" he asked.

"You would laugh at me if I told you," she replied; "you have always said I was unpractical."

"Distrust that man who protests too much," he answered. "I am the most unpractical person I ever knew. That is why I make such a virtue of practical ability. Did I not devote an entire chapter to the subject in my book? I am like the reformed temperance lecturer who spoke with such conviction on the horrors of delirium tremens."

"But you haven't reformed," she retorted.

"Oh, yes, I have," he insisted; "I reformed yesterday."

His blue eyes were winning. He anticipated what she had to tell him. She, the delight of his intellectual life, was so personal yet so impersonal an element in his existence!

"It's some sketches I've been making," she explained; "wait until I get my portfolio from the library." She went into the house and came back with

the big black book under her arms, and, clearing away the tea-things, put it on the table between them.

"I am growing impatient," he said. "You are a long time opening it." He began to untie the strings, his expression mischievous as Tiggy's might have been. It was this frequent lightness of mood playing on the surface of his real scholarship which made him charming.

She laid her hand protectingly on the book; their fingers barely escaped touching. "No, no," she said, blushing. He, too, recognised a change in her. She was no longer as calm, and seemed more like a young girl than he had ever known her. And he was entranced by this rare mood in her.

"I will tell you," she began, her eyes on his. "So often I have been on the desert at sunset, and watched the mountains grow more and more magnificent. And then I have felt so wistful when I would look from them to the setting sun. I have felt that the mountain view could never be ruined, but as Sahuaro grows into a city ugly office buildings and houses will rise to spoil that level line of the desert which is now so beautiful. So I picture to myself the buildings I would like to see go up against the sunset. I thought of a church, but that would be only one, and so I amused myself building a university. Unfortunately all my building had to be done on paper."

She opened her book and showed him the water-

colour drawing she had made of a group of buildings in the old mission style of architecture.

"You see, I have copied Santa Ines for the chapel," she pointed out to him.

He caught the inspiration of her thought, and raised his eyes to hers with a kind of worship shining in them. She loved the desert as he did; she was like its embodied spirit. He was filled with wonder and admiration for her, this woman of exalted vision, and he remembered Aspasia, the wife of Pericles.

A while of silence succeeded. She sat with her hands resting lightly on the drawing, the little table between them. He leant forward, defiant of the pain in his side which made him wince, and taking her hand lifted it to his lips.

He never forgot her amazement, her shame. Not until that moment had he seen the depths of her trust in him. His face burned at the look she gave him, the primitive look of a woman startled.

She took up her embroidery again. "I wish I might see my plans followed out," she said, matching a skein of silk. He saw that her one desire was to bridge over the embarrassment of the preceding moment, and that the only thing which now remained for him to do was to accept the situation, and continue the conversation along impersonal lines.

"For a moment," he said, "I had a feeling of regret that the element of eternity in the landscape

would have to go. Even your beautiful buildings did not compensate for that wonderful unbroken line of the horizon."

"I know it," she answered, "but I still maintain they would be better than office buildings and separate houses."

"Of course," he assented, but he scarcely knew what he was saying. How could he explain to her that he had not been thinking of her as of an ordinary woman; that she stirred all the poetry of his nature, and he saw in her a type. But he was thankful for her tact, which had recalled the past, which glanced into the future, and decided to accept this incident as unimportant in their friendship.

They maintained the conversation along neutral lines, but all the time he was becoming more conscious of the fact that his first impression that she had changed was correct. As he watched her embroidering he thought that the colouring had suddenly gone out of her personality; her hair was dull, her face pale. A restless unhappiness quivered and went in her face, and settled greyly in her eyes. He was reminded of the desert in a sullen mood when yellow sand-storms whirled and stung, and obscured the air. But never in its strangest moods had the desert ceased to make its eternal appeal to his imagination, nor did she now. He realised that she was unhappy, yet could not believe the evidence of his eyes. He had known a tragic

mood in her when her father was killed, but her sorrow had been too exalted to find expression in restless unhappiness. He spoke to her, and she looked straight at him with eyes which did not seem to see him for a moment. He could not believe that his one foolish moment had wrought this spiritual estrangement. The breeze blew the water-colour drawing she had made from the table into the garden, and neither of them observed it.

When he rose to go he saw that she tried to be unconventional and charming once more, even walking to the gate with him, and calling attention to the plentiful bloom of the roses over her doorway; then, remembering the bundle of magazines, she insisted upon his waiting while she went back into the house to get them for him.

But he went away profoundly depressed. As he walked home he was stung by the thought that her magnanimity had been due to her consciousness that he was a sick man. He, too, could appreciate that he had shown the sentimentality of a sick man, and he knew that if he had been in his usual health he never would have forgotten himself. But the fact did not lessen his humiliation.

## CHAPTER XV

LISPENARD prepared his own supper that night, and, after he finished, filled his lamp and put on his dressing-gown. Then he seated himself at his table to write. The evening had become chilly, and he would have enjoyed a fire, but he felt that he had not the strength to go out and bring in the wood. The young man who had been staying nights with him would not be in until late, as he was going to an entertainment in town. Lispenard was glad to be alone, to work undisturbed on his new book. It would be the first time he had written since his illness. His humiliation of the afternoon lent now a certain sternness to his mood, and he wrote forcefully because of it. An hour passed away, and he became completely absorbed in his subject, stimulated to more nervous effort by the frequent catching pain in his side. He felt that he was working against odds, and his mind was running a race with his physical self. A little before twelve he reached his limit of endurance, and put away his manuscript, but when he would have risen he was surprised to find that he dare not get up from his desk for fear of falling. Such weakness seized him that he thought he would have fallen to the floor. It now remained for him to wait pa-

tiently in his chair until the young man should return. It could not be long, for it was already late. He wished he had made the effort after all to build a fire. The room was growing cold. He held his chilled fingers near the lamp to get them warm, while he glanced over his desk, wondering what he should do to employ himself while he waited. He was in no humour to write a letter, and there was not a book nor paper on the table which he had not read. Just without his reach, offering a Tantalus draught of delight, his books lined the walls either side of the empty fireplace. His eye glanced them over fondly, proudly, lingering on the new rich edition of the "Arabian Nights." Then he noticed the slim blue volume of Sill's poems, and wished he might re-read the "Venus of Milo." Line by line the poem came to him—that immortal vision which had befallen Praxiteles. The sculptor had wrought the perfect figure from the flawless image in his soul.

He, himself, had striven to invest a mortal woman with the attributes of a goddess. He saw that the poetry his imagination had woven about Miss Armes had been sentimental; that it had now crumbled to her feet like a veil of ashes, leaving her very human, the eyes he had thought all serenity wide with the look of a woman startled. The goddess he had divined in her was made mortal by his own weakness. But the flaw was in himself, not her, and he

thought with a pity which was scarcely personal that the sentimentality wrought by the sick body revealed a spiritual insincerity. He went over the scene of the afternoon, and did not spare himself in his humiliation, analysing pitilessly the impulse which had led to that caress. She had shown him those plans for an ideal university, and as his mind caught the inspiration of hers, his heart had leapt to the thought that her lofty visions set her apart from the ordinary experiences of women—love—marriage. Her devotion to the things of the mind seemed like faithfulness to him whose intellectual companion she had been so long. His love of the desert had symbolised itself in her mysterious personality. He drew pen and paper toward him, and began writing a sonnet to her as the embodied spirit of the desert. When he had finished it he folded the paper and enclosed it in an envelope and wrote her name on the outside. It was a disappointment to him that he was not more of a poet. The thought always seemed a finer thing to him than the expression, and he had not the lyrical gift.

It pleased him to write her name. To-morrow he would destroy his verse, which he had written only to say hail and farewell to his old conception of her. There remained to him a friendly and lovely young woman, but his goddess had been a mirage woven by the magical air of the desert. And he remembered Trent's appeal to him to

leave, his urgent warning that he had remained too long. His soul rose and combated his friend's judgment, and resolved to win its spiritual victory yet from out of the desert. That struggle for life in the restaurant had left him more of a man, and of sterner fibre. The humiliation of the afternoon was purging his soul of sentimental dross, and he saw how he had turned from his wife's struggling and anxious spirit to the peace of a girl's untroubled beauty. He sickened with self-scorn as he thought of Adele's faithfulness to her children's welfare; her impulsive honesty; her warrantable bitterness. He had never thought himself unfaithful to her; he looked now into the depths of his own deception. He, the philosopher, ever boastful of his love of truth, how had he dealt with her? And suddenly, as real as if her actual voice had spoken that moment in the room to him, he heard her say:

"Theodore, look at me just once as you used to. Look at me kindly, Theodore, in the old way. Do not make me feel I mean nothing to you."

And the appeal had not touched him at the time, but the words had remained in his memory. His poor wife! Ah, if he could but take her to his heart that moment! Clearer his vision grew and clearer, until in his white face, as he sat there so weakly in his chair, his eyes flamed blue and spirit-like.

For some moments he had been conscious of a noise

in the street, and as it drew nearer he recognised drunken singing. The revellers were going home from their party, and he was alarmed lest one of them should be the young fellow he expected.

"I could not deal with a drunken man," he thought helplessly, and managed to rise and go to the door and lock it. Then he turned the lamp low. The steps and singing stopped in front of the house, and in a moment the handle of the door was turned, and a foolish voice called his name, hiccoughing. Another voice, more sober, called to the fellow to come away and let the minister sleep. There were some quarrelsome words, another trial at the door, followed by a kick on the panel; then the sound of a scuffle, and finally quiet, and the sound once more of their singing down the street.

He was so grateful when they had gone that the cold perspiration stood in beads on his forehead, for he was in no condition to go through a scene with a set of hoodlums. He had not the strength to reach his bedroom, and he lay down on the lounge. He had forgotten to blow out the flame of the lamp, but it would soon go out of itself, for the oil must be low. The lounge was near a window, and he managed to push up the shade so he could command a view of the outside world of night. The excitement and depression of the day had been too great a strain, in his weak condition, and brought on his old trouble of the heart, so that in

his agony it seemed to him his life was torn from him. Never had he known such pain; it was like dissolution. When it at last left him he felt that he was dying. This roused in him no rebellion, and he awaited the end calmly, content that in dying he might look to the last on the beautiful, peaceful desert. One wish must be left ungranted, and that was his desire for the comfort of Adele's hand in his. The low-turned lamp was beginning to flicker. He saw this by the shadows it cast on the wall. And as this light within the room grew dimmer, so the desert air outside grew bluer and more brilliant, ever encroaching, until its radiance alone should fill the room. It seemed to him that the flickering lamp-flame was his own soul going out, to become absorbed into the fathomless blue air of the night. Poignant as fresh pain came the thought of Adele's anguish, stabbing his peace. For her sake, he must blow out that lamp. If he let the light flicker out of itself, he would die. He reached the desk with strength almost delirious, and blew out the flame.

The night grew grey; the rose of dawn was aflame in the sky, and he knew that he still lived. The morning slipped into the afternoon; the burning sunshine poured in upon him, and he lay with his arm over his eyes, for he was too weak to rise and draw the shade down. He had been so well yesterday that he had told Mrs. Burns she need not come, that he might be down to call on her to show her the improvement he had

made, and so he lay alone all day, sleeping fitfully. He had waking, troubled dreams, not of his wife, but of Miss Armes, in which she ever escaped him like a mirage.

It was Cozzens who came late in the afternoon, and who, when he found the door locked and no signs of life, hurried around the house and entered by the back door.

Lispenard saw the big fellow, and knew he was saved. He put out his hand to him weakly. "Cozzens," he said faintly, "Cozzens," as if the very name gave strength.

Cozzens undressed him with the tenderness of a woman, and got him into bed and slipped his powerful arm around his shoulders in order that he might sit up.

"And take a nippy," said the great fellow cheerfully, reaching for the flask in his hip-pocket.

Lispenard was very feeble, but he knew he had passed through the crisis. "I don't want you to call that solemn fool," he said, when he was able to talk. "It isn't my wound. It was an attack of my old trouble. I overdid. I want something to eat."

And a little later he added: "And light up your cigar. I want the smell of tobacco in my nostrils once more, and to have you read the paper aloud."

About nine o'clock they heard a knock on the front door.

"Coming," called Cozzens, throwing the paper he

was reading down on the bed and seizing the lamp from the bureau.

Lispenard, left in darkness, heard him explaining to the person at the door how he was.

Then he heard the reply, and recognised Miss Armes's voice. "I was anxious about him, and when I was going home just now from the post-office I didn't see any light, so I came over to investigate. I thought he looked badly yesterday afternoon."

He was not proof against the sting of this fresh humiliation. How she must have been revolted by the unwelcome kiss of a sick man! He turned restlessly on his pillow, wishing she would go. "Vanity, vanity, all is vanity," he said, and scorned himself for caring that he must pay the price in mortification. The price was so little for such a priceless self-revelation. He might well be thankful.

Cozzens was asking her to step inside a moment, while he went out into the kitchen to get a cup. The coffee was out, and he wished to borrow some from her for breakfast. As he went into the dining room he told her that she could go to the bedroom door and speak to the invalid if she wished.

"I might disturb him," she said, and Lispenard, hearing, was amused. Women were always less likely to pass over scenes of sentiment than men.

"I see there's a letter to you on the desk," said Cozzens, returning.

"Oh, thank you!" she answered. "I suppose it's a note Mrs. Lispenard must have enclosed in one of her letters for me. I've found it."

Cozzens thrust his head into the bedroom. "I'm going across the street with Yucca to get some coffee for breakfast. I'll be back right away."

Lispenard was smiling in the darkness. He thought it would have created some sensation had he been found dead, and on his desk that last final word to her. Who of the living could read it right, and know that his hail and farewell was to his fancy, and not to the real woman? "There is much virtue in caution," he told himself. "I shall write no more poems in my present condition of health."

As Cozzens and Miss Armes were going out of the gate they met the young fellow who had been drunk the night before. He was going in, when the big mine owner stopped him.

"You vamose the other way. We don't want you around here any more."

The two walked on. Miss Armes glanced back. "He is still standing there by the gate. I think he must wish to go and apologise to Mr. Lispenard."

Cozzens turned around in the middle of the road and stared back. There was a menace implied in his powerful figure, his absolute silence. The young fellow hesitated, then went away, whistling jauntily. "It takes me to deal with a Mexican," he said, in his

husky, pleasant voice. "You bet they don't make their whining apologies go down with me. I rule 'em."

At her doorway he delayed her a moment that he might ask her again to marry him, and she repeated her refusal. His scheme of existence was to marry her and settle down near Mr. and Mrs. Lispenard and the two boys. An engagement of indefinite length would have pleased him, for he was in no haste to marry. Like a sailor he had a sweetheart in every port, and he was at present engrossed in a black-eyed widow at the Capital. He was tempted to marry her, but he felt he could never trust her as he could Yucca, although she attracted him the more, for black eyes were irresistible to him, doubly so because he thought them dangerous. He was secretive with Lispenard in regard to his love affairs, having great respect for the cloth, although his friend did not always wear it. While she was gone into the house to get the coffee he hummed his favourite Spanish air.

"Yucca," he said, when she came back, "Lispenard once said a queer thing about you to me—that you were like the desert."

"I?" she said, without amazement.

His full eyes grew speculative. In the dusk her face looked strange to him, even in all its familiarity of feature. "I declare," he added slowly, "you do. I can't put it into words, but it's

there. The desert's in you." Fascination crept into his gaze for the first time in all the years he had known her. He attempted to kiss her, and barely touched her cheek with his lips.

"I don't want you ever to come here alone again," she said. She stood still for some time when he had gone. Yes, she was like the desert, the barren desert, which had no beauty in itself, but caught all by reflection, even as her life had no reality of experience, but fastened on dreams.

She went into the house, and into the room where her father's portrait was, and stood looking up at the fierce soldier, with his eagle eye and his unquenchable pride. He was the one reality of her life. And he was dead! She rubbed the back of her hand slowly with her handkerchief, then she rubbed her cheek. Her house was silent and she went into the court where her father used to walk, and there it seemed less lonely to her. Some creature was lapping greedily, as only a desert animal could, at the fountain, and she saw its long body as it stood on its hind legs, its furry pointed ears, its eyes glistening in the light from the window. As she called to it, it ran away. She was not frightened, but went to see how it had made its way in, and found that old Teresa had left an outer door leading into the court open. She closed it and went quietly back to the fountain. She remembered a story she once read of a girl who had been reared in ignorance

of death, and she felt in a strange way their fates were similar. One lost the preciousness of existence because she did not know why it should be prized, and she whose life had been made all beauty seemed to have lost reality. She shook with passionate revolt. Who loved life more than she, and with all her pride longed more for its experiences? She thought of Trent, stern, rugged, unbeautiful, and felt that he had pushed her from him. She raised her arms in half-embrace and let them fall about the rim of the fountain. The stone struck chill through her lace sleeves. She was weeping. Where was he now? And she, shut in this place of beauty—a fairy princess in a fairy garden! Who would believe her tears could be bitter?

Lispenard's recovery was slow after this relapse, and it was days before his strength fully returned to him. Yet he was thankful for the weariness and pain. For years he had been so free from illness that he felt he had lost sympathy with sick people. He saw, too, that he had all the weakness of over-scholarship, and had become abstracted and impersonal. He decided to do more active work and get himself out of his bad habit of over-thinking. He was weary of books, and wished he might take an overship at the mines under Cozzens. The old longing, that fairy wish to live several different lives, was ever in him.

Day after day before his eyes was spread the won-

derful panorama of the desert. His love for it was the great romance of his life. He looked to it now for inspiration for the future.

One afternoon that thing so rare that its coming seemed a miracle, happened; the clouds, so brilliant, so white in the turquoise depths of sky, drew together. The desert became grey as the sea in a fog, and it rained. He got up from his bed and wrapped himself in his dressing-gown, and seated himself in front of the open window. The mist from the driving rain blew cool upon him. It carried him back to April nights of long ago, to the swimming-pool, to the trill of frogs in a marshy place, to the puddles on the sidewalk beneath his own bare feet; Adele's face, sweet and wet as a little rose in the rain, and their first childish kiss in the old barn in which they had sought shelter. Intense emotion ran through him. From all wistful longings for the beauty of the East he had deliberately turned for years. Now these homesick yearnings flooded his spirit, and brought him nearer his wife in sympathy. His philosophy seemed barren, compared to this flooding emotion which racked him. So far his life had been a failure. He had not even any influence over the poor handful of people which made up his congregation. They accepted him with the large toleration of the West, and admired his learning, but they left him alone, save when his offices in the church demanded his presence. The rains were

calling him East once more, sounding in his ears with Adele's voice. He could hear her pleading in the rain. But the call of the desert was mightier. To turn his back now and go away would be acceptance of defeat. It was here that he would wrest his victory, and in his success Adele should find her lost happiness.

For years to come would the rains that spring be spoken of by the old inhabitants of Sahuaro. It seemed as if the clouds kept their force for that one place, and rolled back and broke over the little town, and rolled and broke again and again. The streams rushing down the mountains carried huge boulders along, and then the water lost itself in the choking sands, and was vanquished by the conquering desert and dropped below to the underground rivers. The toughest roots were torn up and carried short distances. The water rushed into an *arroyo* which, to the memory of the oldest inhabitant of Sahuaro, had never been anything but a shifting bed of sand. Haydon, who spent most of his time during the rain up in the little balcony, looking off to the desert through a field-glass, was first to notice this new stream, and told Miss Armes, who had come down to the depot to telegraph to a cousin she expected to postpone her visit until the rains were over. The glimpse through the field-glass made her wild with excitement to go nearer, and she hunted up Cozzens and persuaded him to go with her. They rode straight against the soft and misty wind.

The day was captious as April. Now a shower drenched them to the skin, and they were delighted as children. Had it not been for the clinging wet sands, they could not have held their horses in, for the animals were as exhilarated as they.

But when they reached the boiling pool where the stream plunged to its death in the smothering sands, the glory of their ride departed. The water had turned up the skeletons of a party of emigrants who must have perished long ago. They saw iron implements, and a kettle of past date, and a clumsy waggon-wheel.

They sat on their horses, gazing down on this hideous revelation, feeling an indescribable woe. Cozzens was the first to break the silence. "Poison," he said briefly, and, turning his horse's head, told her to come, and they rode home again without a word.

Where the dry bed was there had once been a spring of bright, sparkling water, and the fact that the party had all perished in the same place showed they had drunk of it, unobservant of the fact that nothing grew about it, and that there was no trace of animals coming there to drink. There were still such springs on the desert, and it was to the honour of an experienced traveller over the trails that when he saw such a stream he stopped and scratched or wrote on a board or stone the word Poison, and beneath, a second explanatory word, Arsenic, and erected it near the bright water,

with infinite pains, bracing it with stones against the dragging sands.

When Lispenard heard of the discovery he insisted upon going to the place the next morning, weak though he was. To him alone the sight was not depressing. He was filled with sublimity, and the magnificence of the prophecy in the Bible came to him afresh:

"And the sea shall give up its dead."

That afternoon the old mission Roman Catholic priest went out with his Indian converts and acolytes, and buried again the bones, and said a service over the grave, and piled stones on it in the form of a cross.

"What does the poor body matter if the soul is free?" said Lispenard, when he heard of the proceeding. But, nevertheless, it struck him as peculiarly fitting that the Indians, sprung from the first inhabitants of the land whose treacherous waters had killed their alien guests, should bury them, and that the service should be that of the first church established in the desert.

And through it all he waited his inspiration, watching the leaden sky and the forlorn desert and the crouching mountains.

The skies cleared, and the miracle of the rains was revealed. The mesquite and grease-wood spread in wide and lovely patches of silver-grey and the candlestick put out its row of single, little green leaves, the

brightest green on the desert. The yucca bore its tall bloom of pale yellow blossoms, and the flower-of-gold, loved by the Spaniards, was in the mountain crevices. The cacti put forth gorgeous, scentless blossoms in purple and such scarlet that it was a marvel. Flowers appeared which had not been seen for twenty years. But all too soon the sands sucked up the moisture, and the efflorescence of colour and bloom vanished in the scorching sunshine; but the big roots underground were natural reservoirs, and animals dug at them and drank, and became sleeker and lost something of their fierceness.

One evening, as he sat watching the sunset, its long rays reaching across the level sands to the magnificently rising mountains, he thought again of Miss Armes's plan of a university which should rise against the eternal splendour of that sky. It seemed to him afterwards that he must have had a moment of vision, for he saw the roofs and towers and long colonnades against that glowing orange west.

His inspiration had come. He saw his work.

Here in Sahuaro should rise a university, and in it he would teach young men those ideals he loved.

His rejuvenescence was complete.

## CHAPTER XVI

DISILLUSIONMENT in regard to his vast fortune had already fastened upon Cozzens. His personal habits were simple, and he had no desire to travel, so that when his friend proposed he should employ his riches to leaving some lasting memorial of himself to his town, the idea was instantly attractive. But he protested against the university project. His idea was to build a splendid church, or a library. It was some time before Lispenard could convince him that the complete university should embrace both of these features. The like institution in the Capital was poor and struggling, and run by politics, housed in a few shabby buildings; and the big mine owner had no desire to see such an experiment repeated in the town he loved.

"But it will not be the same," Lispenard persuaded patiently. "It is because that has not the free spirit of the true university that I want you to endow one here." He pointed out to him the suggested beauty in the drawing Miss Armes had made, and Cozzens, having, as his friend always said, imagination, if not culture, sent her sketch East to a leading firm of architects to be developed properly, and a general estimate given of the cost.

Lispenard found an unexpected ally in a newcomer

to Sahuaro. The miracles of the rain had reached the ever-attentive ear of science, and the government at Washington sent a man to investigate. He was an experimental botanist of wide reputation. Like all scholars of Jewish extraction who have once turned the acumen of their race to the acquirement of knowledge, he had succeeded brilliantly. He needed an assistant, and Lispenard offered his services, glad of the opportunity to eke out his meagre salary. This Professor Abendroth, black-bearded, with soft, melancholy brown eyes beaming behind his huge gold-bowed spectacles, looked an ascetic and a dreamer. In reality, he was an enthusiast, fond of fun as a boy, and shrewd as Cozzens himself. He had a room in the depot to sleep in, and rented an empty adobe ranch-house for an experiment-station, where he kept snakes and lizards and Gila monsters. He discovered two new poisons, and his joy was unbounded. Like Trent, he experienced the sympathy and hospitality of the West, and found gifts that an occasional cowboy left at the depot for him in Haydon's care. These were generally some rare variety of plant, a tortoise, and once a tiny box of living jewels, the beetles that hid beneath the stones. Abendroth confided his delight at these attentions to Lispenard.

"It is not personal, for they do not know me. It is far better. It is a tribute to their government, which I represent."

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

While he was there Miss Armes had a guest arrive to spend a few weeks with her, and the two visitors were a considerable addition to the limited society of Sahuaro.

This lady was a cousin of Major Armes, and the feminine counterpart of the portrait of him. She had been too selfish to take any real interest in her cousin's daughter, but she visited her occasionally when it suited her own pleasure and convenience. Lispenard was really devoted to her; he relished her cynicism and found her scorn of his own profession refreshing. She invariably informed him coolly that he was wasting his life, but that she personally was not in the least concerned. She was the product of nearly seventy years of unbroken health and spiritual pride and financial independence. Neither she nor Cozzens had any liking for each other. She was bored by him, and he on his part told Lispenard that she didn't meet his idea of a natural old lady.

She and Miss Armes often accompanied the two men in their botanical expeditions into the desert, and Mrs. Holt was as untiring as any of the other three.

Something of the old spirit of the place before Adele went away was restored, and the four, including Cozzens when he was at home, met evenings with Miss Armes to sort out and catalogue the specimens collected during the day.

Abendroth soon discovered that his hostess was the only person on whom he could depend to continue the work faithfully into the evening hours, for Lispenard and Mrs. Holt invariably drifted into conversation, to which Cozzens listened, smoking his heavy black cigars and thrumming the mandolin when he was not jingling the loose coin in his pocket.

But he generally tired of Mrs. Holt, and drew up to the table. His own hands, considering his build, were extremely small, but Abendroth's hands were large and heavy, yet the skill and delicacy of his touch was remarkable, and it was fascinating to see him separate a flower into its minutest parts. The scientist had opened a new world to Cozzens. He knew the desert in its bigness; he had never before formed any conception of its infinitude of small things.

He was not more absorbed than Miss Armes; and Lispenard, restored to strength and welling humour, was amused at the depths of his own vanity in ever having supposed that her intellectual interest was indicative of faithfulness to him. She turned the same clear gaze he had once thought personal upon Abendroth, who was charmed by her, and wished his wife could meet her.

Now and then the professor entered into the conversation of the others. He had never enjoyed himself more in his life than on the desert. He liked the people, and was interested in the Indians, and

had become acquainted with the old mission priest; the flora was fascinating; he basked in the sunshine.

"There's my friend at home," he said, "experimenting with electric lights and yellow walls to cure skin diseases, and here's all this glorious sunshine going to waste, actually oozing into the ground, day after day, and few getting the benefit of it. Your irrigation projects don't appeal to me. I would like to see the desert left as it is, the health resort of the world. I am surprised that your University has no botanical laboratory. It has a good mining school, I observed, but no department of irrigation, nor chair of Spanish. How are your young men going to learn the value of their own environment? A university should first meet its home needs."

Cozzens, thrumming idly on the mandolin, glanced up shrewdly. He had not capitulated to Lispenard's urgent persuasion, in spite of the fact that he consented to have the plans drawn up. He had done this to please him and Yucca, in much the spirit he would have indulged Jim and Tiggy. He would let them go as far as he thought wise, and was not unwilling to foot the bill of the extravagance they had urged him into. He intended to have the plans framed when they arrived, and to present them to her.

"What do you mean that a desert laboratory would do? All this sort of thing?" he asked in his husky

voice, and with a wave of his hand toward the cataloguing.

"Much more than that," Abendroth answered, looking at him over his heavy gold-bowed spectacles, and forgetting his specimens in the interest he took in the subject he had opened; "much more than that, Mr. Cozzens. It would effect the permanent betterment of the human race."

"How ridiculous!" cried Mrs. Holt. "These scientists claim everything. Botany was not made so much of when I was young, any more than dentistry. Look at me. Every tooth in my head is sound, and I have twice the strength Yucca has. How do you account for me?"

"The question is beyond me," put in Lispenard, his eyes twinkling.

"Well, pass me a peppermint," she said. "Go on, Mr. Abendroth. Don't act so like a schoolgirl, Yucca. It looks simple in you. If you haven't your education by this time, I'd conceal the fact." She smiled at Lispenard, appreciative of her own wit.

Abendroth was waiting patiently until she should allow him to continue. "For instance, Mr. Cozzens," he said, "my school holds that a proper regulation of moisture supply is essential to the production of high-quality grains. In the laboratory where I conduct my experiments in Washington I have made the attempt to produce conditions of aridity, but this

experience here only serves to show me how futile the attempt was. You can't put the varied conditions of outdoor life into a glass box. If my time were unlimited, I could show you practically just what I mean. I should plant various grains, and try the effect of the varying quantities of water, and also more or less saline water, to determine the nutritive value obtained by more or less moisture."

"I like that idea," said Cozzens; "it's practical."

"I am going to see the advisory board when I go home, and see if something cannot be done through the Department of Agriculture to establish a desert laboratory here in Sahuaro. Even when we protect the ground crops from actual rain, the amount of moisture in the air defeats the end of the more delicate experiments."

"I thought you said such a laboratory was needed in the University, instead of here," Cozzens said, puzzled.

"Better transfer the site of the university here," answered Abendroth, only half serious, and unaware of the appeal which had been made to the big mine owner. "I don't think it could do worse than in the present buildings, and here is the purest condition of aridity for laboratory work."

"Well, come, let us have a little music now," proposed Mrs. Holt. "Go ahead, Yucca, and light the fire in the other room, where the piano is. If I'm cold

I don't pretend to enjoy anyone's playing, I don't care who it is. This tampering with nature," she added in an aside to Lispenard, whom she made her crony, " is ridiculous. Leave things to the Lord. I've done so all my life."

" Even to your religion," he rejoined slyly.

" It couldn't be in safer hands," she retorted. " The major always advised me to attend the Episcopal church, for he said it wouldn't interfere with either my politics or my religion." She enjoyed the little fling at him, and went chuckling down the hall to the parlour, where her cousin had hastened to light the fire.

Abendroth remained only long enough to have a cigar and a glass of wine, and hear a little of the music; then he took his departure. He had further work to do before he went to bed, and he always wrote a detailed account of the day's adventure to his wife, who was an invalid. This night, however, he was not allowed the rest of his evening. Cozzens was insistent that both he and Lispenard should come up to his room above the bank building for a talk.

The evening had convinced the frontiersman that there might be something in the proposed university, after all. He admired Lispenard none the less because he respected Abendroth's judgment the more. He had the greatest confidence in the practical genius of the Jews.

"Of course," said Cozzens, after he explained why he wished to see them both, "it has been in my mind to build a church."

Abendroth, when he saw the value his words might really have, brought a perfect avalanche of arguments to bear upon Cozzens's indecision. Where would he find in the town the congregation to fill a denominational church? But a university would be the magnet to draw people from all over the Territory, if not from the East itself. But it was not until he showed that politics must enter into the scheme if the site were to be changed, that Cozzens really gave in. He had mixed much in politics, and the idea fascinated him at once. He felt budding within himself a new and expanding interest. Lispenard had placed the ideal side before him, but it was the acumen of the Jewish scientist which suddenly made practical Yucca's dream of beauty.

Abendroth's soft, melancholy brown eyes glowed behind his spectacles, and he kept passing his large, sensitive hand nervously over his black beard as he talked.

The three finally parted at midnight, and Lispenard walked home alone, almost dizzy with his solemn happiness. He had gone out without locking the door, and he had no sooner crossed the threshold than he had an instinct that there was someone else in the house. He dismissed the idea as absurd, but yet he could not rid

himself of this feeling of a second person in the house with him. He lighted the lamp on his desk, and looked around the large room. It was undisturbed. Some small change he had left on the tray which held his pens and sealing-wax was still there. His nervousness was mortifying to him, for it was making out of his home a place which creaked and whispered. He decided not to go to bed immediately, but to write to his wife. The natural longing of the man in him found vent at last and he begged her to come home to him. He wanted her to share with him the joy of having such a man as Abendroth with them, and he desired the sweetness of her sympathy in the university project. Twice, while writing, he laid down his pen and looked around, thinking that someone stood behind him. At last he rose and went into the next room, as though drawn irresistibly.

Adele lay on the bed asleep. One hand was under her cheek; her dusky hair was disordered and her little travelling hat and veil were tossed on the bed beside her. She had not changed her black gown, and her valise was on the floor. She looked like some stranger who had crept into a deserted house to rest a while before continuing her way. He saw her quite distinctly, although the only light was that which came from the adjoining room. He longed to kiss her, but dared not, as though the silence were of her own choosing and he must not break it. His heart was

beating heavily. Yet as he hesitated she woke with a start and rose quickly to her feet, staring at him in the maze of the half-awakened sleeper.

"Have you come back to me?" he said. "Oh, Adele, Adele!"

In the dimness of their room she was in his arms, sobbing with joy.

At last he drew her out into the lamplight of the other room, that he might see her better.

"This isn't my wife. This is some girl," he insisted.

Her colour rose with her delight. Then suddenly she had both hands on his shoulders, and was crying out: "Theodore, you have been ill!"

It was long before he could convince her of his present health. He said nothing of the fight at Campi's, but reserved the tale for some future time. He wished now only to hear of her.

"Why did you not come for me?" he asked. "I was only across the street."

"I thought so," she answered; "but I was afraid."

"Afraid!" he echoed.

"Why, yes, dear; because of that five hundred dollars I took. I started home from Southbury in such good spirits, and was so eager to meet you; and then, all at once, I realised what an awful thing I did when I asked Jarvis Trent for that money."

"Nonsense," he said.

"And the nearer home I got, the bigger that five hundred dollars grew, until I was sure everyone in Sahuaro must know about it. You know how things do leak out. No one saw me when I got out with the other passengers. I hurried home, and found you away, and the house was dark, and it seemed to me I wasn't welcome."

"Do you want to make your old Theodore cry?" he asked.

"I waited in the dark such a long time, and then lay down for a little while, I was so tired. I thought I could go back to the boys if you didn't want me," she ended timidly.

He thought how she had lain on the bed, still in her travelling dress, her hat and veil near by, as if she were a stranger who had crept into an empty house to sleep before continuing the journey. He saw the pathos of her departure, the still deeper pathos of her unwelcomed return into the dark house. He rose and brought her the letter he had commenced. "It is finished now, and delivered, my dearest," he said solemnly. "I don't believe any woman ever answered a summons home sooner."

She read it through with delight. "I knew you wanted me, even if I did borrow that five hundred dollars," she said, then glanced at the letter again, and added: "You don't mean to say that horrid old Mrs. Holt is visiting Yucca Armes. I wouldn't have missed

seeing her for worlds. I can actually get a whiff of her peppermints here across the street."

While she prepared supper, scolding a little about the condition of the kitchen, as he knew she would, he told her of the evening's great event, but she was too absorbed in the happiness of their reunion to appreciate fully what he was saying.

"I didn't think I would tell you at first, but I guess I will," she said. "I don't like Southbury any more. Oh, it was awful! Everyone seemed so timid to me, and afraid to speak his mind, unless it was a moral question on which they all agreed; and they kept asking me if I weren't glad to get back to Southbury, and never cared to hear about the West at all. And everyone was so rich and stupid."

"I suppose they told you how refined they all were in making no vulgar display of their money, didn't they; and how much they did for charity?" suggested Lispenard, his eyes twinkling. "I know them."

"It was really because they were so stingy; and they were so inhospitable, except in a most formal way. But the worst of all was that they bored me, and I was wild to get home," she said.

She was proud to tell him how well the boys were doing in the school, and how fond their uncle was of them; and as she, in all the pretty excitement of her return, sat opposite him at the table where they had

their little supper, he realised that he, too, was at home once more.

As she talked her dimples went, and her mouth drooped.

"What is it, dearest?" he asked tenderly.

She had not meant to say a word; now she could not restrain herself. "I miss the children," she said. But she did not tell him, too, that the sting in her grief was his failure to miss them as well. Her home-coming should not seem a real home-coming without them.

## CHAPTER XVII

TWO years had passed since that eventful evening when Abendroth persuaded Cozzens of the practical wisdom and beauty of placing a university in Sahuaro. The Legislature, in consideration of the endowment that was promised, voted to change the site of the University as soon as the new buildings should be ready for occupancy. The plans which were made followed along the lines suggested by the drawing Yucca had shown to Lispenard on that long-past afternoon in her garden. The buildings were to have long corridors facing a large court, and the chapel was to be at the head of the main entrance to the university. The architectural form was in the purest mission style, and nothing could have been chosen which would blend more perfectly with the peculiar landscape. Its massive style fitted in with the mountainous background. Yucca refused to accept the water-colour drawing of the plans.

"I want you to hang them in your own office," she told him; "that is the proper place for them."

He hung them instead in his bedroom, for he couldn't bear to conduct business with these plans before his eyes. From a financial standpoint, it was scarcely reasonable that he should spend the greater

part of his life wresting a vast fortune from the State only to give it back again. The framed plans hung on the bare walls of his bedroom, and he used to sit quiet a little while after he came in evenings, studying them out, smoking one of his black cigars and fingering over the gold eagles in his trousers pocket. At first he was impatient over the years which must elapse before the buildings would be completed, but by degrees the vastness of the work won upon his imagination, and he felt the appeal which the building of a cathedral must make to those at work upon it, although they would never see it finished. Mingling with the grandeur of the conception was a tenderer emotion which he never expressed to anyone. That university was being erected for Jim and Tiggy, whose photographs remained unchangingly on his bureau.

He dug the first spadeful of earth on the site they selected, embarrassed by the cheering of his townsmen, and when the first building began to rise his content and importance knew no bounds. Every evening he strolled over to note the progress of the day, and when he was away and came back he was always amazed to see how little had been done in his absence, and swore frightfully. The Agricultural Department at Washington had pigeon-holed Abendroth's appeal for a desert laboratory, and Cozzens determined to put it up himself after a while.

"I am building my castles in Spain right on my own land," he would say, bringing his powerful fist down on the desk in his office. Sometimes he made excuse to open the door into his bedroom, which adjoined, and show the plans to whosoever came up to conduct business with him.

He liked to point out the delicacy of the water-colour tinting, the vividness the red-tiled roofs would give, and the effect of the long colonnades about the court. The bond of sympathy deepened between him and Lispenard during these two years, and many a time the thought occurred to the younger man that the greatest man the university would ever know was its builder. Not the wisest in point of scholarship, but great as the makers of a land are great.

These two years were the happiest in Mrs. Lispenard's life, notwithstanding the fact that both of her children were away. Her husband had ceased to be pathetic to her. Pride in him, that glory of a wife, was hers at last. Lispenard's book had gone a weary round of publishers, and he finally ventured to send it to one of the richest and most influential houses, in sheer desperation. Nothing could have amazed him more than did their acceptance of the manuscript, and it was published early in the second year. His success surprised them all. The reviews were so excellent that the publishers decided to bring out an English edition. Jarvis Trent wrote to him his most prized letter of con-

gratulation. Trent forgot the hurt about the cheque made out by Cozzens which Lispenard had given him, in the newborn warmth of his feeling over his friend's success. He sent him a subscription to a clipping bureau, and wrote that he had taken out a second subscription himself, that he might not miss any of the reviews.

"Trent was always the best and most loyal fellow in the world," cried Lispenard, touched by the letter.

"Is this his handwriting?" asked Miss Armes, who happened to be in the room when he read it. She picked up the envelope and glanced at the address.

"Yes," he said. "Would you like to hear the review which he enclosed from the *Press?*"

As he read, Mrs. Lispenard happened to look up and saw her guest's eyes fixed upon her husband's unconscious face with such a look of passionate wistfulness that her own heart almost stopped beating for a moment, as if something she had long dreaded had actually come to pass at last.

Lispenard put down the review with a sigh of humourous regret. "All good things must end," he said pleasantly. "I would it were longer."

"You are getting very vain," Adele told him. She stopped sewing, for her fingers were trembling. Months had passed without any stirring of the old jealousy. Now, all in a brief moment, it flamed up more fiercely than ever.

Miss Armes laid down the envelope she had been holding, and rose. "I must go. I am really tired. I think I walked too far this afternoon." She had not seen either of them at the post-office, and so had brought up their mail along with hers. "It is so early, Mr. Lispenard, that I shan't want you to go home with me."

"She is afraid to trust herself alone with him," Adele thought bitterly, and she said good-night to her without meeting her eyes. When she was once more alone with her husband her tragic mood found expression. "Sometimes, Theodore, I have been afraid our happiness is too perfect to last. I know you think me foolish, but——"

"But what?" he asked, as she hesitated.

She was ashamed to say.

"No one can take your heaven from you," he added, with his subtle and delicate smile; "you hold it in yourself." And after a moment he continued: "Sometimes I think that if either of us had thought we were going to die, we would have been eager to say much, to exact promises——"

"No, dear," she interrupted, with simple justice; "you never would have exacted promises, but I would have. You were larger than I, Theodore."

"That was because you loved more," he hastened to answer; then caught himself up, laughing. "Oh!

what have I said? I meant only to be gallant; that it was I who always loved you the more."

"Now you take all the credit," she retorted, her dimples showing again. She could not long remain sullenly jealous. Her nature was too happy. "What did you start to say?"

"That we would have been eager to exact promises and assurances, but now I feel we have reached that perfect understanding which needs no words."

It was her lover speaking.

Lispenard looked forward to the establishment of the university at Sahuaro as to his emancipation. A chair of philosophy was endowed by Cozzens, and he was to fill it; and he looked forward to the practical fulfilment of his ideal, which was the teaching of young men. He hoped to instruct them that the true Church should be a higher university, where mature men could embrace the deep philosophy of their own age, after the preparation their college had given them in study of the wisdom of the ancients. If they would find the teaching of the classics of permanent value in their lives, they must ever be unwilling to leave them when the doors of their *alma mater* closed. He offered to prepare young men for college, and three pupils accepted his invitation. One was an Indian, docile to learn and reciting, parrot-like, the faulty Latin taught him by the old mission priest, who had adopted him as a son, and whose darling he was. Another was

a young man in his own parish, illiterate, but of sound judgment and dogged perseverance; and the third was a lad who had been sent West for his health. He had traditions of greater culture than Lispenard's parishoner, but he had less vigour. His association with these young men awakened in him his first real longing to see his own sons. He saw almost too clearly, for inspiration to teach them, the limitations of the former: the Indian, bound by the religious tenets of the Roman Catholic Church; the calculation for material success as the reward of intellectual labour in his second pupil; but this last was more endurable to him than the intellectual thinness of the third student. His pride was touched by the quality of his own sons, as it was revealed in their letters home, and he began to see that they might comprehend his ideals more than many others.

He thought, with mingled humour and contrition, that his affection followed the inductive system; he was enthusiastic for many young men before that enthusiasm centred in love, quick and personal, for his own children. The prospective removal of the site of the University had been widely advertised through the beauty of the plans, and also his book; for his publishers had stated that he was to have the chair of philosophy.

The great romance of his life remained—his passion for the desert. To its influence he attributed the

amazing success of his book. He knew that his philosophy was creative; he had caught the boldness of the desert; the critics remarked a kind of radiance in his pages; they were written in a land of sunshine: many reviews spoke of the force in the book; it was due to the eternal struggle for existence in that country, for only by fighting his environment had he maintained his intellectual interests; the charm of the style was said to be a fault in that it distracted the reader from the sense; did not mirages invite, and beauty which had no substance weave illusions in the desert air?

He had something of the poet in him, but he was most a philosopher; and he believed that when the inventive genius of his country had exhausted its possibilities the mind of the people would turn to a deeper study of the soul. His passion for Miss Armes had never returned, but her undeniable beauty made the eternal appeal of perfection.

The bond of loving sympathy strengthened between him and Adele.

"You keep me sane and wholesome," he told her, and added merrily, "a proper family man, buying shoes and school-books. Never regret that you left me, but think of the lesson I learned through your absence."

"My going did not change you," she said humbly; "I should love to think that it did—that I could have

influenced you so much; but your book was written before I went." She would not judge except by worldly success or failure.

He took her hand. "My dear wife, you will never know what I mean when I say that you are moral and I naturally unmoral, and that I am trying very humbly to learn of you."

She stopped him with a kiss. "I am not nearly as good as you, Theodore. It makes me indignant to hear you say such things about yourself. Yes, it does, dear. I mean it."

"Didn't I say you would not understand?" he insisted charmingly.

Content as he was with her and his work, the longing for his sons' return increased within him. Adele's love for them was desire for their welfare and her own happiness in them, but he was eager to have them forward his ideals.

Jim's letters were sturdy, exact, and always enthusiastic. "There is no quality I prize more than enthusiasm," Lispenard would say. "It is youth itself."

He laughed over his younger son's occasional, variable letters. "Tiggy has no enthusiasm," he said, "but he has personal genius, and that is the gift of the gods."

Both of the boys wrote naïvely of their pride in the notice their father's book excited. At the bottom of

each of Jim's letters was a conscientious postscript, telling the number of pages he had read since last writing, but Tiggy wrote triumphantly that he read the whole book through in one evening before bedtime. Their school closed about the middle of June, but Mrs. Lispenard did not know the exact date on which they would arrive. She had written to her brother not to tell her when they were to start, for she would worry all the time they would be on the train. Nothing she had ever done had amused Cozzens and her husband more than this determination on her part.

"She keeps us absolutely unsettled by it," Lispenard confided, in a burst of laughter, to his friend, as the two men sat alone. "If I knew when the boys were expected, I could compose myself to work evenings until the very hour of their arrival. But now she wants us to be hanging around the plaza every night for a week."

"She's as young as Jim," answered Cozzens, in his husky, velvety voice. "She's got to have something to amuse her."

Mrs. Lispenard, finding that neither of the two men was inclined to yield to her persuasions to meet the train every night, sought Yucca for companionship, and took her down to the plaza with her. She dressed herself in her prettiest gown, and started out every evening after supper, in the gayest spirits, to call for her friend. She might have been a girl going to meet

her lover. Her jealousy of her companion was always spasmodic, and Yucca was restored to her fullest confidence and affection once more. She made no secret of her anticipation of the coming winter, when the changing of the University to Sahuaro would bring more society into the little town.

Lispenard noticed that wherever his wife went she brought brightness. She was not particularly interested in the second book he was writing, and she quite neglected him in her absorption over the boys' homecoming; but if ever anyone were her own excuse for being, surely Adele was that.

Although it was early June, the summer was over in the desert, which lay scorched and brown to the sun's hot rays. Even the cacti and mesquite looked parched, and the sunsets were gorgeous because of the heat and the constant dust in the air.

"I have a feeling they may have started early, before the school closed, and will be here to-night," Mrs. Lispenard remarked as they went down together one evening. For all the heat of the day, the twilight was cool, and Miss Armes had drawn about her shoulders a pale pink shawl.

"I have not seen you wear that for a long time," said her friend. "Blue is lovely on you, but I think I like pink best."

She smiled.

"I know you don't care," Adele continued; "and

that's why you irritate me so. It makes you too superior not to care that you are beautiful."

"I do not know that it has ever availed me much," Miss Armes answered, her hand slipped through her companion's arm; but the words were not uttered with either bitterness or resentment. Though the air was cool, and she had brought her shawl, the sleeves of her thin white gown ended just above the elbows.

They reached the plaza as the Overland rushed into the station, and Mrs. Lispenard hurried forward. The boys were not on the train, and she looked around for Miss Armes, to join her again. But she had disappeared. She went over to the post-office and waited until the mail was distributed; then went back to the depot again and asked Haydon if he had seen her.

"How queer for her to run away from me!" she said.

Haydon was mysterious. "I suppose you know somebody's come," said he. "Now, Mis' Lispenard, you know you know."

She felt herself grow faint. "And I missed them!"

"Oh, I don't mean the boys," he said; "I mean somebody else."

She went away convinced that he was jesting, for Haydon had become more than ever a privileged character. Halfway home she noticed a man pass into the light of the street-lamp. She knew the tall figure and the quick step at once. It was Jarvis Trent. She was

about to call out to him, in her surprise and delight, to wait for her, when he crossed to the opposite side of the street. She watched him until he entered Miss Armes's gate, and then hastened home to tell Theodore of the amazing arrival.

## CHAPTER XVIII

JARVIS TRENT, as he stood at the doorway, heard the sound of the piano within the house. He raised the knocker and rapped. The music ceased; there was the sound of a light step, and then the door opened, and he saw her standing on the threshold, in the dim light from the inner room, the long hall dark behind her.

"I don't see who it is," she said, as he took her hand, involuntarily extended.

It seemed to him that they stood long in that palpitant half-darkness, conscious of the recognition her yielding fingers gave, while her cool voice denied that she knew him.

"Is it you, Mr. Cozzens?"

The masculine directness of his own nature was amused by her finesse, and his whole being warmed to the helpless yielding of her hand in his. Not know him, when her fingers clung and trembled! And all at once he knew his journey ended in triumph.

"No," he answered, stepping inside; "it is I."

"When did you come?" she asked, and he saw that she faltered.

They went into the parlour, and she sat down on the piano-stool, facing him, and he remembered that she

sat there when he called on her two years ago to say good-bye. He had reached her home, stern with conflicting emotions, of shyness and longing and self-distrust, and these had gone when he greeted her. But the joy which had succeeded vanished so quickly he could scarcely believe in its reality. Could her fingers have been warm, when her eyes were now so cold and her face so pale? The parlour itself seemed damp. He had forgotten the chill of adobe walls when the night comes on and a fire is not lighted. He found himself speaking formally to her, making the platitudinous remark that time was an illusion, and that she had not changed in two years.

"I don't think one is apt to change much in two years, if one has neither illness nor trouble," she answered.

He was looking at her arms, slender like those of a very young girl, and white, even against her white dress. Their slenderness, the little lace ruffles above the round elbows, the gentle and lovely contour of her head, inspired him with indescribable tenderness.

"You have been fortunate," he said.

"I do not know," she rejoined. "I have sometimes thought that people are more fortunate if they have some trouble."

"You think that happiness would have some relish then," he said, his strong face lighting with his infrequent smile. "What have you been doing these two

years? Lispenard wrote me that you were largely responsible in getting the university here."

"You have not seen the plans yet, have you?" she asked, colouring with pleasure. "Mr. Cozzens has them framed and hung in his room. They have been our chief interest. But we have missed the boys. I think I have wished to see them almost as much as Mr. and Mrs. Lispenard. It has been lonely."

He wondered that one who had so sweet a self for company should ever be lonely. "Yucca," he said, leaning slightly forward, his hands on the arms of his chair, "do you know why I have come?"

She did not answer him. Her eyes widened watchfully, and he was irresistibly reminded of the first time he had ever seen her, and the strangeness of the impression she made on him when he looked up to see the pale oval of her face beyond the green globe of the lamp in his friend's home. He saw now that her watchfulness sprang from timidity.

He drew from the inside pocket of his coat an envelope, and took out a paper closely written on one side. "Why did you send me this?" he asked.

She folded her hands together tight in her lap, and the white lace on her breast stirred with her quickened breathing.

He was too earnest of their future happiness to be compassionate of her timidity now. He sat, characteristically a judge, still leaning forward in his intent-

ness, the stern, level lines of his mouth and eyes impressing themselves upon her; his head looked massive, and she noticed that his hair was more thickly touched with grey.

"Was it because you thought I had defied your charm, and that you wished to show me how even Lispenard, whose judgment you knew I was apt to value above my own, had succumbed to your fascination?"

He saw that his words hurt her, and that she was too proud to make any denial. He softened. Even a shyness came into his own level eyes at the words he next spoke. "Was it sent in a romantic, even foolish, mood, Yucca, as we all sent valentines when we were young?"

"Yes," she answered. The spoken word would have brought him to her feet, but her gesture withheld him. All her sweet blushes, all her inviting timidity, was gone, lost in a look of pride so great that he was appalled. For the first time he saw her likeness to the fierce soldier whose portrait hung on the wall above the piano back of her. It was a spiritual, not a physical, likeness. "But a romantic and foolish mood is a passing mood. It does not last nearly two years," she said.

"Do you mean to punish me because I did not come sooner?" he asked gently. She would not reply, and after a moment he continued: "Won't you come and sit down here beside me on the lounge? I feel that I cannot talk to you so, across the room."

She rose, but, instead of crossing to him, took the candle from the mantle, and, stooping, lighted the fire, which was laid and ready.

"I did not realise how cold it was," she said. She half knelt, waiting to see if the fire would burn; the melting wax from her carelessly held candle dropped on the hearth. The red flame leapt up gloriously, with such an effect of leaping, all-embracing light that for a second she seemed almost transparent, she was so white.

"The sonnet refers to you as a goddess," he said; "but I see in you a household spirit, the woman whose love lights the fire around which the family life circles."

She rose and looked at him, smiling, as though the warmth of the leaping flame had left some faint reflection of its ardour on her spirit.

"Are you laughing at me?" he asked, smiling too, not less appreciative than she of the clumsiness of his compliment.

She drew up a rocking-chair and sat near him, looking into the fire. He had a blessed sense that no one would come to interrupt them, that he had her to himself. The slightly parted hair on her forehead had the tint of pale, shining gold which he had noticed in children. She was so exquisite, so entrancing a woman that he felt the hopelessness of ever really winning her. He could not fathom her charm, but it seemed to him

that it lay in her elemental freshness. Delicate as she was, he yet saw that she possessed in herself the feminine counterpart of those qualities which he remembered made Cozzens so big and masculine a man. Each had an unhampered personality. There had been nothing shallow or contracted in their environment.

With a man's desire to lay his life before the woman of his supreme passion, choosing her alone to be his judge, so now he told her of his early struggles and ambitions, his youthful love for Adele, and his meeting with her again there in the desert. He did not conceal that he believed it was for her sake he had never married, although he never grudged Lispenard his happiness. He now regarded her as though she were his sister, and, except for that first boyish infatuation, he doubted if his love had ever been any deeper than it was that moment.

"No," she said; "you never loved her as well as your own ambition. You will never love any woman as much as that."

"Do you know me as well as that?" he asked. "Then you do not know me at all. Listen to me, Yucca. I was never jealous of Lispenard in those days. I felt he deserved her. But when I read that sonnet he wrote to you it maddened me. I ceased even to think of Adele and to resent it for her sake. I used to take out that sonnet, and read it over and over, al-

ways tempted to destroy it, but constrained because you were in it. Every line breathed you. I could not even be sorry for my friend. I could not stand the thought of his writing that. Don't you see, my darling, it was not all jealousy. He was a married man. He had no right to see you in that way." It was the first time in his life that he had ever uttered a critical word of Lispenard. "When I said that foolish thing, a moment since, about your being the fireside spirit, do you suppose I did not know I was foolish? It was because I saw so well what he saw in you that I resented it. I wanted you to be something different to me, different from what any other man in looking at you could see."

"Why did you never write to me, then?" she asked him. "Why did you stay away two years?"

"It was because I still clung to the thought that I loved Adele. I felt that in yielding to you I gave way to fascination without love. You were the opposite of that conventional ideal woman for whom she stood to me. Don't misunderstand me."

She was wounded. "And when I sent you the poem you thought I was only vain—scheming——"

"I tried to think that," he admitted miserably.

"I did not want you to forget me," she said. Simple as her words were, her pride made the incident remote, as though her emotion in regard to it had long since passed away.

"Why did you think I sent it?" she asked him next. "You did not know my handwriting."

"No," he answered; "but I knew Lispenard never sent it to me. A man is not apt to send such a thing to another man. And then, too, he would have known my address more definitely than just the name of the city."

"If you love me now," she said, "it is because you have cared so much for him."

"I don't follow you," he said, distressed. "What is there in common with my friendship for him and my love for you?"

"Because all that is best in me I owe to him. It is his thoughts I express, and his ideals," she told him.

"His ideals," echoed Trent dully. He passed his hand across his eyes, as though to see clearer.

"Yes," she continued; "for I met him when I was very young, and in all the years afterward I never heard him utter one unkind or prejudiced word, nor be less than he is now."

"I know what he is," Trent interrupted, with a curiously bitter smile; "you need not tell me of his charm."

"My father cared nothing for books, and here in this desert I might have developed into a shallow and ignorant woman, had it not been for him. All the intellectual life I have ever had since I came West has been through my association with him."

"Do you remember that night on the desert, when I accused you of loving him? Was I right then?" he said. He braced himself against the pain of her reply. Who had ever withstood Lispenard?

She looked straight into the fire, and he watched her, knowing she would answer him truly, conscious all the time of how he loved her shining hair, her arms bare to the elbows, not because her hair was gold, nor her arms white, but for the reason that she was expressed in them. He remembered that he once thought she was a woman to make men dream, not one to waken desire.

He was not prepared for the reply she made. "I never knew until that night when you asked me."

"Until I asked you?" he repeated, amazed. Then, "You mean that time in the desert when we were alone and I accused you of caring for Lispenard?"

"I thought I cared for him," she said wistfully. "I did not want to do wrong; but Mrs. Lispenard never seemed very happy, and I even felt their marriage had not been for the best, and that in some future life, perhaps——"

She paused, and he was touched by the extreme youthfulness of her confession. And suddenly he seemed to see the situation in its entirety; Lispenard, an idealist, a poet, making the girl's beauty symbolical; she, full of romance and very young, and Adele, jealous—jealous of what? That Lispenard was a poet!

Yet it was his friend with whom he had no patience, although his mood was all gentleness toward the woman he loved. It would have been impossible for him, in her situation, to have remained in the same town with a person he was in honour bound not to love. He could not have dreamed the years away, as he saw she had done, and never face the moral issue. But a woman, in her innocence mingling her religious feeling with that of her love, could be tranquil in such a position. Her thoughts of love would be as innocent as her prayers.

"If my question could put your feeling for him to the test, then you never loved him," he said. "But how could you meet Adele day after day, if you thought you cared for him? It is that which is not like you. I saw he cared for you."

It was she who was now distressed. "I think I could meet her because I never wanted to do anything to wound her. I loved her, too, and Jim and Tiggy—I loved them all, but I admired him most." And she raised her eyes from the fire to his, blushing a little, and very sweet. "Perhaps I never loved him best, after all. Perhaps it was because I admired him and was so grateful to him. Why, do you blame me? You have always cared for him, too." She was carrying the war into the enemy's camp with no regard for reason.

"Yes," she insisted, "you have always cared for

him, too." It was not only his look, but a memory, which caused her blush to deepen. Could she tell him of her shame that afternoon when Lispenard had kissed her hand? For her own sake, she longed to, that he might understand fully her disillusionment, but she could not expose their friend's weakness to him.

And she looked at him, her eyes bright with the firelight and with laughter. "I love him as much as ever, because I never loved him more."

Her rarest mood was upon her. She looked at him now as she had that wonderful desert evening when she evaded his embrace and fled, wild and delicate, across the yellow sands.

And the pale pink shawl, which had slipped from her, like a mantle from a young goddess, lay now across the piano-stool, one end dragging to the floor.

Was she a woman to make men dream? She was a woman supremely to be desired. The passion of that sunset hour with her in the desert thrilled him again. He would have taken her in his arms and kissed her again and again, but she was so delicate he dared not startle her. But he leant a little forward, and took her hand. "I have walked about the streets of my city, fancying, even when I deemed it most foolish that you could love me, where I should build our home when we were married."

"No," she cried, frightened, "you must never ask me to leave the desert."

He was stunned. That thought had never crossed his mind. "I have a fair income," he told her, "but it is dependent wholly upon my law practice. But here I should be a poor man, unable to support you as I would wish to." He pleaded long and well, but she would not yield.

"You tell me that you cannot leave your city, that your friends are there, your law practice, your political interests. But what of me?" she asked him. "Do you think I care nothing about the future of Sahuaro? Is my home not here, the home my father built?"

"I could not make a living for you here," he repeated. He still held her hand. In her cold decision, that warm touch alone was his comfort. "See how we love each other, Yucca. Our words disagree, but we cannot loosen hands. It isn't worth while for us to contend. You are blind, indeed, if you think all beauty is contained here. Have you ever been much in the woods?"

"No; but when I have, I have always wanted to push the trees away and gain the open spaces," she answered.

"It has always been one of my dreams to walk some day in the autumn woods with the woman I love," he rejoined. He would have put his arm up around her

neck and drawn her to him, but she withdrew, shivering.

"You would imprison me!" she cried. "I will never marry you unless you stay here. What more do I ask of you than you of me?"

"A woman follows the man she loves where he can best make a home for her," he answered. "Oh, my dearest, do you not see that between you and me, you must be the one to yield. It is not in me to give way. It would break me."

His appeal left her cold.

"I want little. You have come back to us here. Oh! stay long enough, and you will never wish to go away again." The candles on the mantel were flickering low; the fire had fallen into embers; her eyes were bright. She was a sorceress tempting him to give up his manhood, to let atrophy his ambition, and live a parasite on her in this vast desert. A chill ran through him. He rose to go. Then his longing for her actual touch, the longing, day and night for two years, which had brought him there this evening, found expression.

"If you will not marry me, nor kiss me, will you not let me hold you in my arms for one moment, and feel your cheek against mine?"

She, too, had risen. "Yes," she whispered.

He put his arm about her, and she rested a moment in his embrace, her cheek touching his. But so shadowy was the caress, so faint to his ardent hope, that she

seemed almost less real than the portrait of her father, touched to sudden life by a leaping tongue of flame from the dying fire.

He found himself walking alone on the street, shaken with emotion, utterly unnerved. In the East spring was still in the air, though the month was June, and its witchery had induced vagrant moods, and whispered to him Lispenard's loved phrase, "The adventure of life." And he had given way to his longing and come, starting almost on the hour of his resolve. His thoughts drove him on now past the plaza, into the open desert. All his doubts returned. His old distrust of her came back, and in contrast to her there rose reproachfully his old ideal, that visionary woman, not unlike Adele, tender, yielding, following humbly the man she loved to the home he made for her. He recalled Adele's father, that judicious scholar who had so influenced his own young manhood. Had not that memory been another tie binding him to faithfulness to her? What could he ever have had in common with the fierce old soldier of the portrait? His first instinct, warning him not to yield to the girl's fascination, had been right. His jealousy of Lispenard was reawakened. Did he not know of the fascination he held for women? And was he, Jarvis Trent, to give up his profession, his means of livelihood, to come and settle in the desert and be one of Lispenard's satellites?

"I will give her up first," he told himself, looking about that dreary waste, unbroken save by the mountains, ragged and black against the glittering sky, and the sleeping town behind him. Yet, even as he stood there, the majesty of the scene won upon him, and he knew the claim the desert made upon her; he, too, felt the immensities. The woods and hills to which he would fain take her were as tales that are told.

## CHAPTER XIX

WHEN he awoke in the morning he could scarcely realise that he had been away so long, for all was unchanged in the bright sunlight. He had slept so soundly that the morning train had come and gone without disturbing him. He dressed and went downstairs, and exchanged a friendly nod with Haydon on his way over to Campi's.

"So," said Madame Campi, greeting him over her crocheting, "you have come back to us."

When he went up to call on the Lispenards he was delighted to find them still at their own breakfast. "How is this?" he asked, shaking hands. "You didn't use to have breakfast so late."

"It's our lunch," said Mrs. Lispenard, amused.

He looked at his watch. It was after eleven. "I forget time in this country of yours until it is gone by." He did not say when he came, nor did they ask him.

Lispenard was too tactful to show his guest that he knew where he had been the night before, and Adele, too, with a secret sigh for her old lover's fickleness, resisted the temptation of enquiring how he had left their fair neighbour.

She invited him back to supper in the evening, and

he spent the rest of the day in anticipation, hoping that she would invite Miss Armes as well. And he was not disappointed. Both she and Cozzens were there. The big mine owner had long since forgotten his resentment and insolent stare, and welcomed Trent back with all the heartiness of which he was capable.

After tea they walked over to the new university buildings, which Lispenard could see from his window as he sat at his desk. Cozzens, eager to point out every budding architectural beauty, did not allow Trent a moment with Miss Armes. But he was so glad to have her near him that he did not mind having his attention absorbed by Cozzens. She had refused him, and still he had no thought of leaving her. It did not even enter his head that he might. She seemed to be unalterably his, and had become the love of his life, as real to him as his own existence. Neither did he intend to make his home in the desert.

The air was full of the colours of sunset, and this flush of twilight bathed the little party and gave a look of illusion even to the buildings, making them look ancient, and transforming the solemn row of the giant cacti growing about them into ruined Greek columns.

Once, as they wandered about, Trent turned to assist Yucca up the steps of the uncompleted building, and the touch of her hand thrilled him so that he was amazed at his own ardour. He was fain to kiss her,

unmindful of her blushes, before the others. And he loved her better for the look of pride she gave him, as if she divined and resented his unfulfilled intention.

"I can't help believing that in this land of beauty will be born the noblest architecture of our country," said Lispenard, laying his hand affectionately on his friend's arm. "See, the very cacti are prophets, and rise like the shafts and columns of a temple! Sculpturing and painting are but the handmaidens to this nobler art. They speak the individual artist, but a building unfolds the national character."

Trent anticipated being Yucca's companion on the way home, but Cozzens forestalled him, and walked on ahead with her himself. His powerful figure, in its tan suit, looked larger than ever, contrasted to her slender form as she walked beside him, yet always with the peculiar air of aloofness which marked her bearing. She wore the dress of the night before, with its elbow sleeves, and over her head a mantilla of Spanish lace. Trent recalled how he had once seen her on the desert, at this hour, walking leisurely, like a lady in her garden.

Adele was in a mischievous mood. She was not unwilling to punish Trent for his faithlessness to herself, and so she detained him and Lispenard until the other two were well in advance. She insisted upon Trent's getting for her a scarlet cactus flower, and when he

finally brought it to her, after some difficulty, she flung it away because it had no fragrance.

"It smells like the desert," she said, dimpling at her husband. She would never yield to his opinion that the desert was beautiful. "Don't let's hurry," she added, teasing Trent; "it's been so long since we three were together. Do you think I've changed, Jarvey?" She seated herself on a rock, and looked up at him, smiling.

"You are more beautiful than ever," he retorted, with laughing resentment. He could have shaken her, for he saw that she guessed his secret.

"Don't spoil her further, Jarvey," said Lispenard; "she is vain enough as it is." He was prying up a rock with his walking-stick, and a number of iridescent beetles were running away from under. "Adele, my dear, your husband can make you rich gifts of living jewels, if you will accept them."

"Thank you," she retorted. "I can adorn myself with them just about as practically as with your treasures in heaven which you have turned over to me."

"Well, you have at least the adornment of a meek and quiet spirit, Adele," said Trent.

Lispenard laughed. His eyes were alight with admiration, and they were bent on his wife.

She looked away for a second, shy as a girl; then rose impulsively and kissed him. It was the first time

she had done so in Trent's presence. His fickleness made her realise afresh her dependence upon Lispenard. Her fondness for Jarvey had not diminished, but she was not yet ready to forgive him.

"Theodore, dear," she cried, linking arms with him, "your little finger is worth Jarvis Trent's whole body. Whatever you are, you are not——" She broke off abruptly. "Oh, the train is nearly due, and here we are! Suppose the boys should come in to-night. Theodore, dear, how can you loiter so? I know we'll be late!"

"Am I never to hear what I am not?" he called as she ran on ahead of them both.

"And look at the ambiguous position in which I am placed," Trent added.

But she would not wait to answer, and the two men followed her, amused.

"I know the boys won't be here for a couple of days yet, at the least," added Lispenard. "Look at the completed building from this point. It is so simple, and yet so admirable in the landscape." He paused to call his friend's attention to the gum which was exuding from the cactus stem where Trent picked the scarlet flower for Adele. "See the precaution Nature takes against evaporation if a plant is wounded. You once said I seemed like a man intoxicated. I am, Jarvey. Out here I have quaffed a 'drink divine.' I am never wearied."

Meanwhile Cozzens had asked his companion sulkily if she were going to marry Trent.

"No," she told him.

His surprise was great. He had braced himself manfully to bear the news of her marriage. Cozzens was not so ungallant as to deny a woman her choice in love. His passion for Yucca was not sufficient to make him jealous, and he did not resent Trent's wooing of her, as he had that other incident when Trent had given Mrs. Lispenard money to run away from her husband. For Cozzens was never to be persuaded that Trent had not lent the money knowingly for this very purpose, and he was always puzzled by the fact that the two had not met later in the East, which would seem the natural outcome of their actions.

Strangely enough, Yucca's reply did not fill him with the gladness it should. She was not going to marry Trent. Therefore, she accepted him; and Cozzens, born rover that he was, with a sweetheart in every town like a sailor, experienced a momentary dismay. And, moreover, there was still a certain señora in the Capital, a young widow, whose black eyes fascinated him, and whose white hands played on the strings of his heart as skilfully as on her guitar. But he distrusted black eyes as much as ever, and he knew that the señora had a thought to his fortune, whereas Yucca's eyes were cool and serene, and she had refused him and his wealth consistently for years.

"Well, my girl," he said; "whenever you set the day, I'm ready."

"Ready!" she echoed; "but I am not going to marry anyone."

She wouldn't marry Trent; she wouldn't marry him. Then what did she intend to do? He puffed at his cigar speculatively.

She glanced around to see if anyone were near them, and lowered her voice.

"What made you think Mr. Trent wanted to marry me?" she asked, full of delight.

Cozzens gave her a shrewd look. "Damme, Yucca, I believe you're dead in love with the fellow." And his own spirits rose with a bound.

"No, no!" she cried.

"So you were only fooling when you said you weren't going to marry him. Women are deceiving creatures." And he remembered with suspicion the señora's black eyes.

"You don't understand," she protested gently, pale with the pain the resolution cost her. "He will not come to live here with us, and I will never leave Sahuaro."

"Good Lord!" he said; "then where's the sense of being in love with him if you don't intend to marry him? I declare, Yucca, you don't talk like a natural woman. I'm astonished at you."

She did not answer him, absorbed in her own sense

of the tragic. She half lifted her pretty white arms, bare to the elbow, and let them fall again. Why should they have felt empty all the day long because Trent last night had drawn them about his neck and she found herself in fancy turning her face that their lips and not their cheeks might meet. Then her father's pride rose in her superior to the instinctive yielding of the woman. Her spirit leapt to this matching of wills with her lover. Her beauty was pitted against his strength, and she knew that she would prevail.

Cozzens was silent. Yucca had always been more or less strange to him, but never as unaccountably so as now. He had a sense of renewed freedom and triumphant conviction that he was getting the best of it in this moment when he consigned the final problem of her personality to his rival. And the señora's eyes were bright and her handclasp warm, but he was in no haste to marry. Yucca's refusal had given him a fresh lease on his bachelor's existence. He would do well by the little girl when she got over her quarrel with her lover, and quieted down into marrying him. She should have a diamond necklace for her white neck, and bracelets for her pretty arms.

The boys were not on the Overland that night, and after the mail had been distributed the little party separated. Mrs. Lispenard and Yucca returned home,

and Cozzens went up to his office to do some work, as he was going out of town the next day.

Lispenard dragged his guest off for a walk alone with him, and Trent went reluctantly, unable to get even a direct glance from his sweetheart's eyes as she said good-night.

It was a mild night, and they went out beyond the confines of the Indian village, and there Lispenard lay down on the warm sands, flat on his back.

"Lie down," he said, "and look up at the stars."

Trent demurred. "How about scorpions and spiders?"

"Lie down," cried Lispenard, laughing at him. "'Art thou slave to fear, my soul? Then do a thousand dangers menace thee.'" He raised himself on his elbow and glanced about. "It's safe enough, Jarvey, really. None of us has ever been bitten, and there are no rocks about here." He took off his coat and rolled it up. "Use this for a pillow," he said; "no, I don't want it. I'm never too cold nor too hot. I'm acclimated, you know."

"Keep it yourself," said Trent; "I am not going to lie down." He seated himself beside his friend as he spoke. Lispenard was anxious to talk over the increasing success of his book with this best friend, and to outline to him his second book of philosophy. The starlight revealed his fair hair, his bright eyes, dark in contrast to his face, of a different whiteness from

his shirt-sleeves. His voice ran on, touching lightly here and there on many subjects. He had much to tell Trent, much to hear.

Above them the yellow stars were dim. Thousands of feet above mists were forming into clouds.

"Theodore," Trent asked abruptly, "how have you been able to hold to your religion in the face of such immensity as this? Think of the races of men who have looked up to those stars, the ancient civilisation that was once here, for instance, and now but the dust of the desert about us."

"I have passed through all that," he answered; "it has become home to me out here although the sense of immensity does not go. It is mystery within mystery, but the soul's aspiration is its own answer of immortality. Do you suppose we can wonder over those stars now, and not know their vital meaning some time? The hungry body argues bread. The future alone gives zest to the present, and I find that I am continually looking forward to those further adventures of the spirit which immortality promises us."

"What is it that makes you so happy, Theodore?" Trent asked. "It is always so with you. You are like a man intoxicated, whose stimulation never goes. But even so, I have never known you to be as you are now."

"No sudden conversion, I assure you," he answered merrily. "Was that what you thought? No, no, something less—vanity, vanity. Do you suppose I

have lost relish of life because I have lived so long out here? Do you think the taste of success is not sweet in my mouth? I have hungered for it, Trent," his voice vibrant with sudden passion; "hungered for it. And it is coming. Behold in me the philosopher, the flattered dreamer turned teacher. I am going to teach the young men of our university what the Church should be."

"I did not know you cared so much for your church," said Trent with wonder.

"Shall I tell you why religion is an empty husk for you?" said Lispenard, turning over on his elbow. "I will be your soul's physician, and touch the sore spot. You have only brooded on religion, you have never thought seriously about it. I think in these days that most of us are not born to faith any more than the schoolboy loves his Latin and Greek. We have lost the heritage of our fathers. But if the boy is soundly whipped into learning his classics, the ideals of those splendid old philosophers will influence him in maturity, although he has forgotten every word of the languages. I never pray myself, except perfunctorily, but Mrs. Lispenard brought the children up to do so. Prayers are the props of our religion. We learn faith by their aid."

"Dear old Lispenard," said Trent, smiling, but full of strange emotion. Had she not said that she had never heard him utter a prejudiced word, nor one that

was unideal? No wonder that she could not leave the place where he was, that she hid her real reason behind a subterfuge of caring for the future of Sahuaro. What woman ever sacrificed the man she loved for the town in which she lived! No, she did not love him. The thought did not make him jealous nor angry now, but profoundly sad.

He looked about them. The mists were gathering closer, the stars no longer sparkled, but were soft and very yellow in the blackness.

"How desperately lonely it is here," he said; "I should go insane if I remained here long." He lifted his hand and let the sand trickle through his fingers.

"Did we ever tell you what Tiggy once said?" asked Lispenard. "When he was quite a little fellow he told his mother that he guessed there was sand enough in the desert to make an hour-glass for God to tell all the time in the world by."

"I'm not surprised at any speech he makes," Trent answered; "he is you over again."

"Did you ever hear of joy making people weak?" Lispenard asked thoughtfully, after a while. "I have had a faint heart ever since Adele came back and my book was accepted, and, finally, as I have seen my ideals taking form in those buildings, it has seemed almost too much. If you don't understand what I mean I can't explain it. To-morrow we must go up to Cozzens's room and see the plans for the complete

quadrangle. He has them framed and hanging on his wall. I often think how we owe all of this to Miss Armes. It was her inspiration. I think I wrote to you about it."

"Yes," said Trent, his heart beating as furiously as if he were a boy. He longed to have his friend continue the subject, but he relapsed into silence, and Trent, remembering the sonnet, wondered if the same beautiful face were forming for them both in the darkness. At this time last night he had held her in his arms, her cheek laid to his. He asked nothing more of Fate than that moment might be repeated. Restlessness, born of his unsatisfied love, was upon him. He determined to leave Lispenard that he might at least walk by her house. He raised his head to the sky and gained a sense of overwhelming darkness. The stars were almost gone. And as if he were once more a very little child he was seized with terror of the dark.

"I never heard such a stillness. It is so awful I would not like to raise my voice. It is a kind of death in life. How can you endure it, Theodore? On the ocean, although the night may be like pitch, you can at least hear the ripple of the waves, and in the forest it is never still—but here, God knows, here is nothing. I can scarcely realise there is air to-night. You might listen forever, and I do not believe you would hear even the whir of a bird's wings above you out here."

"Hush," said his companion. He tapped his walking-stick on the ground lightly, once, twice, thrice.

In a moment came the reply, the sharp little tap, tap, tap, of a prairie-dog in his burrow.

"How is that," said Lispenard, laughing; "can an army of homes be a desert?"

Tap, tap, tap, the little creature was giving its signal again.

Knocking lightly with his stick in answer, he continued. "They follow irrigation. And far below us are the invisible rivers of the desert to which they burrow down."

"I am reminded of Coleridge's lines," spoke Trent, softened.

> "'Where Alph, the sacred river, ran,
> Through caverns measureless to man
> Down to a sunless sea.'"

He rose. "Don't come if you don't want to, but I'm going in. I can't stand any more of this to-night. It's too lonely."

"Go on, then," Lispenard retorted gaily; "I am not going with you."

"Well, good-night," said Trent, looking down affectionately at the boyish figure at his feet. He went away and left him lying there.

He was glad of the cheerful greeting of the little town when he went back into it. People were still eating and drinking in at Campi's; music floated out

from behind the saloon doors, and a couple of cowboys were aiming at the leaping white rabbit and hounds in the open shooting gallery which he remembered so well. A crowd was beginning to gather in a small adobe building where a cock-fight was to come off later. Trent passed the ruffled game cocks, which were as yet tethered each by a cord to a peg driven in the earth near the sidewalk. The proprietor of the cigar stand was throwing dice with his customers, and he could see a couple of industrious Chinese, barefooted and in blue jeans, ironing in the back of the laundry shop. He felt a lift of spirits. This rough, floating population was intensely real and human, and he was more in sympathy with their interdependence than with the solitude of that boyish figure lying alone in the desert, watching the dimming stars. He was in Sahuaro once more, with its quaint Mexican-Spanish traditions infused with American ambition; its adobe houses and green plaza; its low nestling trees and the brooding spirit of the mission of Santa Ines. He did not wonder that Yucca loved it, that she should refuse to leave. He felt himself weakening; a man might do worse than end his days here. He turned from the main street into that on which she lived. The sound of music was in the quiet street, and as he strolled on he distinguished the guitar accompaniment to the voice. It was a Mexican serenading his sweetheart.

The wild love of the song stirred his pulses the while his instinct revolted against lending himself to the mood of abandonment the music invoked.

As he neared Miss Armes's home the singing ceased, and a young man leapt the adobe wall of her outer garden and came toward him, twanging his guitar, and humming broken snatches of the serenade. As they passed each other in the lamplight at the corner Trent recognised the romantic dark face, and nodded to the young fellow. He was a parishioner of Lispenard's. He could scarcely be jealous of him, but he stood long outside her garden wall breathing the magnolia-scented air, thinking that the voice of a boy could reach her, while he had no way to let her know that he stood without, hungry for the sound of her voice and the touch of her hand. And he was scornful and impatient of his own stiffness of moral fibre which could not lend itself to abandonment, which made principles out of conventions, and made it impossible for him to think the world well lost for love.

## CHAPTER XX

JIM and Tiggy were home again, so changed, and yet so unchanged in their mother's fond eyes. Jim was now sixteen, tall and large for his age like the men of her family. In the fall, through his father's coaching during the summer, he would be able to enter college. They intended him to take the classical course first, and then adopt a profession. Tiggy had changed less, but the cold New England winters had done the little fellow good, and his mother saw the healthy colour in his cheeks for the first time.

Often through the half-closed door of the living room Lispenard as he sat at his desk found himself listening to the pretty by-play that went on in the other part of the house between the mother and sons. Adele was a coquette with the oldest boy, and made more of a baby of Tiggy than ever before. He heard her pretence of alarm for the splendid health of her boy when she detected the odour of tobacco in his hair, and his pleased, important protestation in reply that he was not to be treated like a child any more; his fine and confident promise that he'd keep an eye on Tiggy, and "lamm" him if he ever caught him at the same trick.

"Jim would make an admirable censor of public morals," said Lispenard to himself; "he would take no

petty personal view." He opened his watch and placed it in front of him. At eleven o'clock he was going to hear Jim's Greek, and he had only a little over an hour for his own work.

The boys had been home a week, and the novelty of their coming still lingered and made a holiday atmosphere in the house. Under the bronze boar which was his paper weight was a note. Since his arrival Tiggy placed a letter there every morning, and Lispenard always answered it, putting his reply in place of the other. It invariably disappeared mysteriously, and he could only guess from Tiggy's demure expression that he had received it. It was tacitly understood between them that the correspondence was to be kept secret.

"Did you ever," read this morning's note, "sit all by yourself on a big stone and pretend like you was asleep——"

"How can he write 'like you was' and be my child?" murmured Lispenard, and read on.

"——only your eyes were open, and after a while you see two eyes watching you, and winking faster than mamma's little gold watch ticks. And also two long ears trembling because they are listening so hard. His fur is grey like the bunch-grass, and he thinks you do not see him. Do you know who I mean?

"Your kind friend,

"Tiggy."

He took his pen and wrote in answer: "I think you mean a jack-rabbit. Did you ever think a deer had the same kind of big eyes so that it, too, could watch out for enemies? Can you whistle as Cozzens can, and gather a number of rabbits about you? Try it.

"Your faithful friend,

"T. L."

He looked out of the open door and saw Jim going through the gate, and knew he was going down to Haydon's. He thoroughly approved of the association, for he felt that the depot was to Jim what the corner grocery was to a village boy, and that he was acquiring homely virtues from the station-master: shrewdness in judging people, practical suggestions about nursing sick people, and learning the history of the Civil War in the best way from a Southerner who fought in it, and hearing from him quaint tales of the negroes. It fretted him not at all, although it did his wife, that Haydon went about in his shirt sleeves, chewing tobacco.

Jim was glad to be home, proud to tell his cronies of his experiences in the East, more confident than ever that Sahuaro for a town of its size was not to be equalled for attractiveness in the whole United States. The palms about the plaza were finer to him than the arching elms of New England streets; and as for dreariness, what could be more dreary than an East-

ern winter, leafless and cold, and generally grey. He had not learned to like swimming. So much water was foreign to his nature; and who would care for the close woods who had ever watched the black wings of a condor sailing motionless in a boundless blue sky?

Like a sailor on land he had been ill at ease in the New England city, missing the vast freedom of the open desert and the immeasurable sky. He closed the gate behind him, and wandered down the street, his hands in his pockets, squinting a little in the strong light, a trifle defiant and aggressive in his manner like any healthy lad of his age.

Cozzens stood on the corner in front of the bank talking to a couple of men. He glanced at Jim sternly, and gave him a curt nod.

"Fine-looking boy, the minister's son," remarked one of his companions.

"Straight legs and good lungs," said Cozzens brusquely. He had no intention of spoiling Jim.

Jim glanced back over his shoulder at the powerful figure of his friend. He wished he dared hang around Cozzens's office all day wrapped in boyish admiration of the big mine owner, but there was no invitation in the glance he received, and so he went on toward the plaza.

There he found Haydon sweeping off the platform. At present his house contained no invalid, and he was a man of leisure. He handed his broom over to Jim,

and sat down in one of his two big-armed chairs. In return for his hospitality and entertainment he always demanded that the boys who hung around the depot should help him out with his chores.

He took a bite of tobacco and stared out to the desert, his weather-eye cocked. "Looks roughish," he remarked.

"Huh," said Jim, giving a final sweep with the broom, and sitting down in the other chair.

The sky had lost the deep blue of early morning, and was lilac with a reddish tinge. Far off the wind was raising swirls of sand, but the breeze had not yet reached Sahuaro, and the bordering palms of the plaza were motionless.

"Kind of quiet to-day," said Jim, after a while, fretting that he could not go up and hang around Cozzens's office.

"Roughish," insisted Haydon. "It's a storm-breeder."

The mountains were crouching low, dull and threatening in the reddish haze of the air.

"What's Tiggy doing out there all this time?" asked the station-master.

"Where?" enquired Jim scornfully, as if he doubted the observation the question implied.

"Must have found something," commented Haydon.

"Oh, now I see him!" cried Jim.

The little fellow had stopped near the Indian village, and as they watched him he started on.

"Guess I'll go find out what he's up to," said Jim restlessly. He rose and strode off, his hands in his pockets. He and Tiggy had seen little of each other since their return. Away the bond of their mutual loneliness had united them; here their separate interests and Jim's old friends took them apart.

Tiggy was well out into the open desert by the time his brother reached the Indian village. Jim stopped to greet an old squaw who was famous for her pottery, and whom he had always known. She was covering up her clay and several half-formed vases with a heavy blanket. Why was she not making her pottery, he asked her in the Spanish *patois* which Cozzens had taught him. She was chary of words, and for answer looked up at the sky, and out at the desert, and shook her head. She feared a storm, and would not work until it was over, for if the sand blew on the wet clay in the bin it would ruin it.

A little further on he passed old Juan, her husband, who was digging wood for the three-cornered fireplace in their adobe hut. The great tap-roots lay about him on the shimmering sand like evil snarls twisted by a witch.

He heard the Indian's guttural voice calling after him, and caught the word red in the Spanish-American *patois* he spoke.

"What does he want, I wonder," thought Jim with a good-natured wave of his hand. "Too much *mescal*, I guess."

He looked back again over his shoulder and saw that the old man beckoned to him again. Afterward Jim remembered the warning gesture of the bowed wooddigger of the desert, but now he hurried on, anxious to overtake Tiggy, who was some distance out.

"Where are you going, Tig?" he shouted, when he at last neared him. It was nearly noon, and the sun was blazing. He was beginning to feel irritated. "Why, don't you stop when I call to you?" he cried.

"I'm stopping," said Tiggy serenely. But as he continued to walk on, Jim fell into step with him.

"I'm going to build a sand-boat," he said. "I'm going to make the money by working for Cozzens at the mines during the vacation. Won't we have some jolly sailing? Talk about your old ocean, Tig. The fellows at school didn't know anything about it here, did they? Thought I was bluffing. I wish they'd all come out and take a sail with me."

He raised his voice and gave a great shout. "Don't you feel as if we'd only been whispering while we were away. It's kind of good to stretch your lungs once more, isn't it?"

Tiggy followed his example and called out, but the second time he shouted it struck Jim that his tone was peculiar.

"How queer you call," he said. "Why don't you give a good live yell the way I do?"

Tiggy laughed and fled over the sands. When he was at a safe distance he put his hand to his mouth and gave a low, long, peculiar cry.

"You are calling to someone," said Jim, dumbfounded. He looked around and saw no one. He frowned, for he never approved of Tiggy's pretending someone else than themselves was around. "Stop it!" he cried, with the ready tyranny of the older brother, and ran after him. But Tiggy eluded him like a jack-rabbit, doubling on his steps, lighter and swifter than his brother, giving that peculiar cry when he could pause for breath. Then Jim began to laugh as he saw that he was beaten, and he was proud of Tiggy's ability to win out against him.

"The darn little cuss," he said, quoting Cozzens. Jim could have cursed the men at the mines as well as the frontiersman himself. "Here," he called; "you've lost your cap back there."

But he would not heed him, and Jim had to go back and pick up the cap himself. "Come on; I promise to let up on you."

So Tiggy waited, and put on his cap. "I'll tell you what I'm calling. See, over there."

Jim stared. "Get out," he said slowly; "you're crazy."

Far off, it seemed to him, he saw a grey form, yet as

he looked longer it seemed nearer, for the desert was full of illusions this morning. It appeared like a gigantic dog as it stood for a minute on a little sand-hill, eyeing them.

"It's my wolf!" cried Tiggy, dancing with delight. "He has come back."

"He's only got three feet," cried Jim.

"Yes, yes!" shouted Tiggy; "he has only three paws."

Jim bounded ahead. "Come on; let's get nearer him." Curiosity as to Tiggy's familiarity with a wolf was for the time lost in his desire to get nearer it.

"Oh, let me go first, and call," cried his little brother; "you'll scare him."

"Oh, you shut up!" cried Jim, excited, panting. He saw that the wolf was not afraid of them, for it kept at an irregular dog-trot only a short way ahead, once, indeed, so near that Jim saw him distinctly, grey, lean, and shaggy, his red tongue lolling out of his mouth. And it seemed to Jim that the old wolf was actually laughing at them.

"Shut your mouth, you darn fool!" he cried, in high good spirits.

They came into a deep *arroyo*, and the walking was hard. Running was impossible. The fine sand blew into their faces. It filled their ears and hair.

"We've run into a sand-devil, I guess," said Jim.

"Take my hand; keep your eyes closed. We'll just stand still until it dies down."

Tiggy slipped his hand into his brother's, and his instant obedience showed that he realised their danger. It seemed to the older lad that the heat was increasing. He started to speak, and the sand blew into his mouth. His feet were sinking deeper and deeper because of the drifts blowing up behind him. "Unless we get out of here pretty quick," he thought; "we'll be swallowed up."

He dropped Tiggy's nervous little hand, and made a telescope of his own hands while he surveyed the landscape. The sun was reddish. That was what Juan, the old wooddigger, had been trying to tell him. Far off in the sky back of the town he saw a murky, dun-coloured cloud moving rapidly, and increasing in size as it rose above the houses. A sensation of indescribable terror filled the boy's heart. He had never seen anything in nature so angry before. The thunder storms in the East had been full of grandeur, but this cloud was only angry, a seething, boiling mass, darkening the sky. It spread like a pall above Sahuaro, shadowing the low, green trees, the tiled roofs. The little town—his town—was doomed! His parents and Cozzens and Yucca, Haydon, all, would be killed! He had a moment of wild panic. Was there no way to warn them? Yet, as he watched, on the extreme further side of the town,

the red tiled roofs and trees suddenly shone gay in a strip of sunlight. The simoon was passing over Sahuaro. He saw the whole town once more bathed in the sunlight, but a little dim as if in a light fog. His heart seemed bursting with joy and relief. And then awful terror seized him anew. The cloud was making straight for him and Tiggy! It was flying too high, he saw now, to burst above the Indian village. Something pushed against his knees, whining and trembling like a huge dog. It was the wolf which had enticed them on, and he kicked it with sudden fury.

"Come on, we've got to make for the mountains at once, or we'll be choked. Keep your eyes shut. Here, wait a minute." He drew out his handkerchief and tied it over Tiggy's face.

"I can't breathe," the little fellow protested.

"You've got to," said Jim grimly; "breathe through it." He jerked his brother's jacket off of him, and tied it by the sleeves over his head. "Push up the handkerchief a little underneath. Now you can get air all right. Stand still until I get ready."

He remembered that Cozzens had told in such a storm as this men wrapped their tent-blankets over their heads, and made for shelter. They started on, Jim's thought for himself lessened by his sense of responsibility toward Tiggy; and Tiggy's fear quieted by his brother's firm grasp. Straight ahead into that blinding, stinging atmosphere they plunged, sinking

ankle-deep into the sand. And Jim knew that in a moment more that angry, boiling cloud would burst above them.

From his doorway Lispenard had been watching the panorama on the desert until the sand began to whirl through the streets of the town, and he was obliged to go within. His wife came in from her marketing, laughing, her brown hair full of sand. She loved the sense of blowing and excitement.

"Come and sit down here with me," he called to her; "the wind has reached the new buildings, and see how the sand is beating against them."

"How dark it is, suddenly," she cried. "I wonder where the boys are?"

"They are either with Cozzens or Haydon watching the storm," he answered.

They saw a curious brown cloud forming in the sky near the horizon.

"I never saw anything so wonderful," he cried, his eyes bright as an eagle's in his fearlessness of the elements. "Can you realise that this terrible storm coming is made only of sand and wind blowing in a clear sky?"

Adele shook. "Come away. Don't watch it, Theodore. Come away. I wish the children were in."

"Think of riding in the wind like that cloud!" he cried. "It is dust, not rain, as if the genie of the earth had wrapped itself in its brown mantle, and risen

in anger. There's another idea for a poem I shall jot down in my note-book for Tiggy to write some time," he added, smiling.

"No," she said, dragging at his sleeve. "Come away, dear." Her first enjoyment of the wild excitement had gone.

But the cloud passed over Sahuaro and burst somewhere out on the desert beyond the Indian village, toward the mountains. The darkness which had been suspended over the town was gone, and the sun shone red through a whirling atmosphere. Adele, too, brightened, and resumed her sewing, sitting at her husband's side.

They were surprised when they glanced up at the clock and saw that it was nearly two.

"The boys have stayed out somewhere with Cozzens," he said.

"Well, I'll get us a little lunch, then," she answered.

"You sit still," he insisted; "I will get lunch for us myself."

"It has grown cold," said his wife. She caught his hand and pressed it to her, smiling. "You are not cold, Theodore, dear, are you? Perhaps we had better have a fire in here." There were times when the sweet motherliness of her nature seemed to overflow to him, and the tenderness between them had been deeper since her return home.

"I feel that separation more now that I am with you than I did even when away. I cannot bear to think that I ever left you. It always makes me sad to think that I was away from you when you were ill that time."

He could only kiss her, dumb in his self-reproach to think he had caused her to wound herself.

He stirred up the embers of the morning's fire, and heaped on the mesquite wood. Then he cleared a space on his writing-table, and brought in the salad, and mixed it there, after a receipt of Cozzens's.

"He used to make it for me when I was ill," he told her; "there ought to be thirteen different things in it, but I have only six, the lettuce, the peppers, the banana, and the onion, and cucumber, and a tomato."

"Oh, that's plenty!" cried Adele. She had little respect for Cozzens's cooking.

They heated the water over the fire for the tea.

"Have you felt older since the boys came back?" he asked.

"Yes," she confessed deliciously; "have you?"

"Mercy, yes!" he said.

"Isn't it terrible?" she said.

He cut the loaf of French bread on a board she had brought home to him as a gift. The white loaf on the dark wood with its garland of wheat, and the words, Be Thankful, was pleasing to him. It was fine and simple, like the dignified injunction of an old religion.

From the cupboard above the fireplace he took down an old blue jar filled with ginger.

"I was saving that as a treat for the boys Sunday evening with their tea," she protested. "Yah Sin" —their Chinese laundryman—"gave it to me for Tiggy." But nevertheless she was delighted that he should remember her liking for the dainty.

It was the first time since the boys' return that they had been alone, and they enjoyed the lunch together as if it had been a lovers' tryst.

"See how red the sun is! It makes me think of Indian summer days at home when the sun was in a haze all day long," he said, a happy look in his blue eyes. "How beautiful it is!"

"Yes," she assented, but the look of the desert began to appal her, and she sat with her back to the window.

The wind howled and shook the casements; the sand began to drift down the chimney, and made a fine patter on the fire.

"Isn't this splendid!" he cried; "isn't it fun!" They had finished luncheon, and he searched among his books until he found a thin old-fashioned volume bound in maroon watered silk. "I'm going to read you Whittier's 'Snow-Bound.'"

She took up a bedroom slipper she was making for Tiggy. "If I'm to hear 'Snow-Bound' before a fire I shall be the house-mother and do my knitting."

Halfway through it she interrupted him. "Don't you think it is horrid for a woman to be secretive?"

Lispenard marked the page in the book, and closed the volume. "Adele, there isn't a book in my library which I haven't at one time or another tried to read aloud to you, and which hasn't a slip of paper to mark the place where you interrupted me. Who is it you think horrid? I know a woman never deals in abstractions."

"It's Yucca," she confessed, her dimples showing; "she never mentioned that first night Jarvey Trent called on her to me. I wish now I hadn't told her I was once engaged to him."

"I don't think they'll ever marry," Lispenard answered. "She would never leave Sahuaro, and Trent can't change his way of doing. He was always set in his way."

"Theodore," she said, "I don't care how beautiful all the men in the world think her, only I wish I were prettiest to you." She laid her hand on his knee, and lifted her face to kiss him. "Can you imagine we have been married seventeen years," she continued; "and that we have two children? It seems as if we were only just engaged. I feel as if there were only you and me, and Tiggy and Jim were apart from us."

He held her hand closely in his as he stared out of the window at the fiery ball of the sun just above the university buildings.

He appreciated her sensitiveness over Trent's devotion to a woman of whom she had always been jealous. Nothing appealed more to his tenderness than Adele's jealousy. He did not misunderstand it, but knew it was only a form of self-depreciation. As far as he was concerned he would have told her of that afternoon when he kissed Miss Armes's hand, but he knew it would only wound her. Then, too, he felt that any needless confession was spiritually undignified. All explanations between them were petty when the great fact of their love had become so real to them both.

"Look at the sun, my dearest," he said; "did you ever see anything so awful and majestic? I have a sensation of almost Biblical simplicity, as if the Lord were angry with us." He laughed at the absurdity of the thought.

They thought the wind blew the door open, but it was Cozzens who came in, red-faced and spluttering, and shaking the sand from him.

"I can't tell whether you remind me most of Boreas, or a Newfoundland after a bath," said his host. "Where did you leave the boys?"

"I haven't seen them all day, I mean not since early morning," he answered. "Aren't they here?"

"I think I will walk out and get them," Lispenard said, suddenly white; "would you like to go along with me? Any errands you want me to do downtown for you, my dear," he added to his wife.

"Theodore," she cried, "you are afraid."

"No, no," he answered.

She clutched Cozzens for support. "Oh, my God!" she whispered.

"Adele," said her husband sternly, "I am not frightened. I am going out to hunt up the boys, and we will all be back in a little while."

Cozzens forced her gently to a seat. "Now, lookye here, don't be too quick about getting hysterical. Just have a nippy," reaching for the flask in his hip-pocket, "and keep calm."

The two men hurried away. "Look for Mr. Trent. Perhaps they are with him," she cried, running to the door after them. On the lounge was the half-finished shoe she was knitting for Tiggy. She took it up and kissed it.

"Mother's darling," she said, weeping.

## CHAPTER XXI

MIDNIGHT came and went, and the fury of the storm prevented any search being made. The Overland train did not arrive, for men could not face the storm to clear the tracks. But Cozzens took courage from the fact that the wind was steadily decreasing since the afternoon. The neighbours, kind and concerned, fought their way over and promised to begin the search as soon as the storm died down, and returned to their own homes.

In Lispenard's house, he and his wife, and Miss Armes and Cozzens, sat about the study table. The three, inspired by his example, made a determined effort at self-control.

"Many a boy has had to rough it, my darling," he told his wife; "it won't hurt them to stay out all night. They have probably sought shelter in the mountains."

"I was lost once for three days with my father, but we escaped," said Miss Armes. She was looking over her friend's work-basket. "What is this red and yellow calico for?"

"It's some little dresses for the Indian children. Didn't the society give you any to make?" Mrs. Lispenard answered.

"Perhaps that's what they sent me. I haven't opened the bundle. The women's sewing guild is the only tyrannical feature of your church, Mr. Lispenard," she rejoined, threading a needle. "I'll help make these. Is there an extra thimble here?"

"In a box on my bureau," said Mrs. Lispenard, "my gold thimble. I'll get it for you."

The two sat and sewed, watched by Cozzens, who smoked steadily, and Lispenard, who half smiled, but with set jaw.

Adele looked younger and more vivid than Yucca. Her eyes shone; the bright colour flamed in her cheeks and lips, and her brown hair curled all about her face in lovely disorder. She and Jim were so alike that Lispenard could not glance at her without a contraction of the heart. Suddenly she frightened them all by rising and flinging herself into his arms.

"I can't help crying, Theodore," she sobbed; "but Yucca has made both the sleeves for the same arm."

Lispenard looked over his wife's head as it lay on his breast.

"She will rip it out and do it over again," he said.

"I have it nearly ripped out now," their guest hastened to say.

Adele raised her head, and felt in her husband's coat for his handkerchief to wipe her eyes. She smiled at the three who were watching her anxiously. "Never mind, I'll rip it out, Yucca. I suppose I am

absurd about the boys, and I know you said only the other day, Theodore dear, that I must expect them to have adventures, and get into trouble more or less like all boys."

"That's the stuff," said Cozzens huskily; "it 'll make men of them. Lord above, if you could know what I've been through! And I've learned Jim how to look out for himself. There aint a thing about the desert from a redskin to a rattlesnake that I haven't given him points on."

"I know it," she agreed, comforted; "and I always feel that Jim will look out for Tiggy."

It was half-past one o'clock, and the lamp was going out.

"The one in the kitchen is filled," said Mrs. Lispenard, and her husband went out and brought it in.

"I told Trent he had no business to start out by himself. When the ponies turn tail to the wind and won't budge, a man isn't going to accomplish anything," growled Cozzens; "and he's wearing himself out for nothing, and will be a lady on our hands tomorrow when we most need him, damned fool!" The big fellow was unable to sit still in his nervous desire for sleep. He twitched and turned like a restless animal, caged, his eyes half-closed. He had smoked so many cigars that his tongue was burned.

"Hadn't you better lie down, and try to get a little nap?" Yucca suggested gently.

"Too nervous to sleep," he growled, turning his irritable eyes upon her. Anxiety always expressed itself in irritation in Cozzens. Nevertheless he got up and rolled himself down on the lounge.

Mrs. Lispenard, with her exquisite housewifely neatness, went into the boys' bedroom and came out with a pillow in a clean, cool linen slip, and put it under his head. "It is more comfortable than the embroidered one," she said. It was Tiggy's little pillow, and she knew that the child would like to have his dear Cozzens lie on it.

It was after two when Trent finally came in, and staggered rather than walked to the chair Lispenard pushed toward him.

"I heard from the husband of that old squaw who makes the pottery that they had seen the boys shortly before noon starting for the mountains," he said.

"Then they are safe!" cried Lispenard.

"It has taken me all this time to get to the Indian village and back. The wind was with me coming home, but I wonder now how I ever reached there."

"I wonder, too," said his host. He had been on the point of starting with his friend, but Cozzens had restrained him from the folly. If the boys were in the Indian village they would have managed to get home, he argued sensibly, but Trent was disposed to follow his own judgment, and would not be dictated to. He had gone eager to relieve his friends' anxiety as soon

as possible should the children by any chance have decided to remain there over night.

Now, after the stress and strain, he almost collapsed in his chair. He felt that he had been riding through an inferno. The room was dark to him, and in the dimness he saw Yucca's face, pale and far away, as if he saw her in a dream. He knew that unless he controlled himself he would call to her by name. Her eyes drew him. He wanted to get nearer, and let his head fall on her breast, and so go to sleep. To save himself from absurdity he staggered to his feet, his eyes dazed.

"Open the door," he said; "it's close in here." He got out on the porch, and leant against the railing. The wind had changed, and where he stood it was comparatively quiet. Yet without this haven there was a roaring in the air and it was hot with an electrical quality which imparted a sensation of creaking to his eyelids.

The other three followed him out, leaving Cozzens asleep on the lounge.

"The wind no longer howls as it did," spoke Mrs. Lispenard; "and it is getting warm. We none of us seemed to realise it, did we? And only this noon we sat by the fire, Theodore."

"Yes, my darling," he answered.

"Isn't it strange to think we can't even see Santa Ines, it is so dark. But I can hear the old bronze bells

ring now and then above the wind, can't you? How did you get home, Jarvey?" she continued.

"I floundered along somehow, and then there were the lights in the depot. Haydon is a good soul. He had a lamp in every window," he answered.

"Someone told me Haydon cried when he heard about the boys," she said in an awed tone, as if the greater grief were the station-master's, and not hers.

Miss Armes looked at her anxiously. She did not act naturally, and she would rather that Adele would cry again.

"Doesn't it seem very warm to you?" asked Mrs. Lispenard. Mercifully she did not think that such heat meant thirst, thirst in the desert for those who were lost.

Trent's head cleared, and he was conscious that the woman he loved stood near him. He thought of his poor friends' sons, and sighed heavily. Now if ever he longed for the comfort of Yucca's love. Let her give it to him now, and he would pay the price. He would stay in this devil's country if she would but once kiss him. He did not care much what happened except that he wanted her. He would drink sweetness from her lips, and forget the terrible thought that burned into his brain: the thought of two boys dying of thirst in the desert. The door swung to behind them, and it was dark out there on the porch. But somewhere in that darkness she was, cool in her white

gown, lovely. In a moment she would be in his arms again, with her cheek to his. He put out his hand. "Yucca," he said hoarsely.

It did not strike either Lispenard or his wife as strange that he should call her by name.

"I don't believe she's here," said Mrs. Lispenard; "she's gone in, I guess." As she spoke she opened the door, and the light streamed out, and showed that they three were alone.

Trent and Lispenard followed her back into the house. Miss Armes was not there, but Adele resumed her sewing as if she had already forgotten her friend's absence. Cozzens still slept peacefully as a child. The heat was making his sandy hair curl about his forehead.

The other two men maintained silence. They had reached the point when endurance was all that was left to them.

A little later Miss Armes returned, sand in her golden hair, in the ruffles of her gown, drenched with it as though it had been rain.

"Where have you been?" asked Lispenard, trying to smile at her.

Trent eyed her grimly.

"I thought that you must have some sleep before morning," she told Lispenard; "and I went home for something the doctor gave me when my father was killed so I would go to sleep nights. But what you

said comforted me, and did me more good than this, I know."

"I remember," answered Lispenard, and his eyes lighted for the first time that night; "I said he went home a spirit armed and victorious. The thought is always visual to my imagination, like a painting."

"It is only three hours before dawn," said Mrs. Lispenard, looking at the clock. "Yucca is right. You must get some sleep."

Miss Armes went out into the dining room, and brought back a glass of water and a spoon. "It can't hurt you," she said, pouring some drops from the bottle.

"Yes, dearest, you must lie down," coaxed his wife; and Lispenard yielded, and took the glass of water and then went into his bedroom. "I wish you would come and sit down beside me, Adele," he said with sudden wistfulness. She went in with him, and put her arm across him, as she sat at the head of the bed. She was very tired, and she rested her head against his pillow; the tears rolled down her face, but she dared not stir to wipe them away for fear of disturbing him.

Yucca stepped to their door and listened. "I gave her some, too, in that glass of water," she said, going back and sitting down opposite Trent.

She shaded the lamp with a piece of paper that its light might not waken Cozzens.

Trent had gone into the boys' room and washed his

hands and face, and brushed some of the sand from his clothes and hair. He still looked tired, but his eyes were bright and his mouth firm.

His companion picked up her sewing again, then let it drop.

"I feel as if all were dead except you and me, and as if it were vanity to sew on clothes for the living."

"You did not wish me to sleep," he said; "you did not offer anything to me; you wished me to stay awake with you. Were you lonely?"

"Yes," she answered. Above the mantel hung the picture of the two little princes in the tower. "Mrs. Lispenard always thought they looked like the boys."

He nodded.

"When I was coming back," she said; "the sky was clearing, and the moonlight was sifting through the sand in the air so that I saw the cupola of Santa Ines."

He smiled. He saw her kind intention to keep him diverted from thought of the lost children.

An hour passed. She sewed a little, and glanced over a page of Lispenard's manuscript which lay on the desk.

"He writes a beautiful hand," she remarked.

The old jealousy smouldered in her lover's eyes. He wished no more of her sweet reserve.

"Kiss me, Yucca," he said gloomily.

She drew her hand away. "Oh, hush, hush!" she cried; "how can you when a matter of life or death hangs over this house?"

"It is a matter of life or death to me," he answered, his gloomy eyes fixed on her.

"Oh, hush!" she said again.

"You will not kiss me?" he said, and waited for her reply. Suddenly he made a gesture as if she stifled him, and he wanted to push her away. "No, I do not want you to kiss me. Why should I desire you to if you do not love me enough to be my wife? I would like our love to be a thing of every day, comforting to us both, a refuge in each other if we have trouble, but you——" He looked away from her.

From above the mantel the two little princes in their stricken embrace looked down upon them.

"You are a strange woman," he said; "I once loved Mrs. Lispenard, that I know. She was not for me, and my way was clear. But as for you who will not marry me nor yet will let me go, what sort of love is that?"

The veering wind blew the sand in the door again, and he rose to close it, stepping softly so as not to waken Cozzens.

She had been right. The moon was up, ghostly as in a fog, but he could see the cupola of the Santa Ines mission. He shut the door and returned to her.

"You do not care. Lispenard was right when he

wrote that sonnet. You are like the desert. Love comes and goes in your heart as this wind blows, now here, now there, and no man can tell where, and he is lost. Like him, I have found you out. You are a sorceress as the desert is a sorceress. Its beauty is an illusion, a chimera. And so I swear are you. He saw you through the veil of poetry. I know my friend. God forgive me that I once condemned him for it. And I let my secret longing for some affection in this world invest you with those qualities which make a woman sweet and tender, clinging to the man she loves——" He paused, choking with emotion.

She regarded him as if she could scarcely believe she heard aright. She remembered her serene life until he had come to trouble it, the restlessness he had brought into it, and his determination to marry her and take her from her home. Oh, had she been false to that better love which was her friendship for Lispenard? It was Trent who had put evil into her mind. Never had her thoughts been disloyal to Adele. How had he dared to say such a thing to her? She raised her eyes to his, and he encountered in her again that implacable pride in which she resembled her father. His eyes were level with her own. She meant to show him her anger, but instead she found herself impressed by the sincerity of his own gaze. Here was a man who would not deviate from what he believed right. Her face flushed; her own eyes fell from his. She re-

membered Lispenard's kiss upon her hand. Was that no disloyalty to Adele?

He saw her pride vanish in timidity, the colour flame bright in her face, and he was won to tenderness. He rose and drew nearer her. In another moment he might have taken her in his arms, but she raised her hand in protest. "No, no; not here."

It was the instinctive self-sacrifice of the natural woman to forego personal happiness while anyone she loved was in trouble. But he did not understand this, and would have put her hand aside.

"No," she cried again, desperate to escape him; "I do not love you."

They had been but half conscious of the fact that Cozzens was breathing quickly; then he began to gasp quickly and painfully. They turned, startled, and saw him tearing ineffectually in his sleep at his collar.

"He is dreaming of thirst," she cried, and ran to him, and shook him awake, trying to drag him to a sitting posture with all her slender strength. "Cozzens, dear, wake up," she cried; "you are here with us;" for he was beginning to fight her away. "You are only dreaming."

Then he realised where he was, and sat up, his eyes starting, his great chest heaving.

"It is the heat," she said; "it has grown very warm."

He took the glass of water Trent handed him,

and gulped it down, and then drew out his handkerchief and wiped the perspiration from his face and throat.

"Well," he said, "I guess it's time for us to start."

"It isn't morning yet," answered Trent, "but the moon is up."

Cozzens rose and blew out the flame of the lamp. After the first instant of darkness they saw the windows were grey. He was right; it was time. "Where's Lispenard?" he asked.

They told him asleep, and he nodded and followed Yucca out into the kitchen. The agony of the long night was over, and his weariness left Trent strangely quiescent. While the other two prepared breakfast, he sat in a chair at the open door of the kitchen. There was no coolness in the air, although it was so early in the morning. He saw his darling, pale from her long vigil, with Mrs. Lispenard's apron tied about her slender waist, helping Cozzens.

While they were at breakfast Lispenard joined them. "My wife is still asleep." His rest had refreshed him, and hope had risen with the dying down of the storm.

Trent saw that he alone of them was almost serene. "He has faith, he believes in prayer," he thought, "while I think it will be only a matter of chance if his boys are found alive."

Cozzens had made all preparations for the start the

night before. Waiting for him at the plaza were several picked men. Two were Indians, and the others were cowboys.

He gave them his orders like a general sending out scouts. He knew the trails as an Indian did. When he finished his directions they started off as if at the signal of a rifle. He told Haydon to telegraph to the station below, and have them warn the engineer on the Overland to keep a watchout for the two boys. Then he drew Trent aside. "We will find them," he said. "You've got to look out for him," with a nod toward Lispenard. He buttonholed him, pushing him back, that there should be no danger of being overheard. "You've got water. Don't give more than a mouthful at a time. Jim will fight for it like a devil. But you won't find them where I'm going to send you. If they got no further than the first mountains, we'd see them coming home now. I think they've been wandering all night."

Lispenard betrayed no impatience at this slight delay. He yielded absolutely to Cozzens's judgment. "The map of the desert will have to be changed after this storm," he said, turning from his survey of the dreary waste as his two friends rejoined him.

"There was one such storm thirty years back," said Cozzens, "and the old Vulture trail was lost in one night and never found again." He swung himself into his saddle.

He and Trent had to wait a moment for Lispenard, who mounted stiffly.

"He's strung too high," muttered Cozzens. "Well, so long," he shouted, and was off like a shot.

The other two followed, more slowly. They passed the Indian village, which showed little sign of life. Sand was heaped like snow against the mud huts, and over the long green rows which showed the irrigated land. The row of ash trees planted as a wind-break was almost demolished.

"The Indians are superstitious about these simoons," Lispenard remarked. "When the sun is red they think it poisonous to breathe the open air, and keep indoors for several days."

Trent wondered how Cozzens prevailed upon the two Indians he sent out to go in the face of such a superstition. Then he recalled the look of remorseless power the frontiersman had when angry. "If they had refused, he would have shot them," he thought.

The heat enveloped them as though they were in an oven. He looked at Lispenard and saw his eyes were inflamed with alkali dust. His own eyes hurt; his nostrils smarted so that every breath he drew was pain, and his ears rang. Yet neither of them had been out in the storm, except when he struggled to the Indian village and back. He now gave up hope, believing that the boys could not have survived.

Before them stretched the open desert, trackless now as the sea. Sunken bowls appeared where it had been smooth, old boulders were exposed, and the greasewood looked like miniature, stunted trees half buried in sand. The mountains rose with a tremendous sense of power, unbeautiful, grim, their base planted in the desert, awful in their endurance against the raging storms. Their tops were reddened by the rising sun.

"Look," said Lispenard, pointing with the handle of his whip.

Trent saw a heap of uncovered bones.

"Perhaps the good father at the Indian mission thought they were the skeletons of heretics when he buried them, and so would not pronounce the blessing of the Church," Lispenard said, "and they have refused to lie still in an unblessed grave."

Trent shivered. Never had he known such an unholy dawn.

Mrs. Lispenard did not waken for some time after the men had gone. "I have been dreaming of a wolf," she told her friend; "was it not strange? I kept dreaming of my children and a wolf. Do you remember that night when Jarvey Trent was here two years ago, and Theodore laughed and said I had discovered a were-wolf?"

Yucca's face blanched.

Adele went to the open door. She saw the sand

drifted like snow in the street to the depth of several feet, and that her neighbour's windows across the way had been broken by the wind. Fruit had been blown from the trees, and some of the latter even were uprooted. A scorching breeze blew in her face. "How hot it is after the storm! I wish Theodore were in." Her speech showed that she had given up all hope for her children. Later in the day she asked her friend if she remembered the old nursery tale of the babes in the woods, who had wandered away and died, and each little bird of the forest had brought a leaf in its beak to cover them with. "But there are no leaves here in the desert," she said; "no leaves!" She let the sewing she was trying to do fall into her lap. The thought of the forest pleased her. "You have never really been in the woods, Yucca. Do you know how beautiful they are, so safe, and very green——"

"'To walk with the woman I love in the autumn woods!'" Yucca started. It was as though Trent were in the room saying those words again! She half raised her arms and let them fall, with that sense of emptiness she had learned to know. Suppose he, too, never returned!

At sunset the two boys had not been found. Cozzens waited only to hear this, and started out his men again on fresh horses, and went himself.

Lispenard came in a little later. He sat his weary horse a moment, as he looked out toward the west,

where the beautiful buildings of the university were rising against the flaming sky.

Trent put his hand on his shoulder as he dismounted. "Go to your wife. We will take care of the rest."

A night of heavenly peace and coolness succeeded the day; the dust settled; the stars shone soft and yellow, and at eleven o'clock the heavens glowed with the rising moon, red as though it were the harvest times.

Long past midnight Trent, who had continued the search, calling until his voice had almost gone, listening until his ears were hearing sounds which existed in his imagination only, returned to Sahuaro.

Lispenard started when he came in, but collapsed again in his chair, as he read fresh denial of his hope in his friend's face. Someone brought Trent a cup of coffee. He drank it and took a second cup. Then he rose to start out again. Lispenard followed him to the door, and wrung his hand at parting.

Trent reached the street before he realised that Yucca had not been in the room. He had not seen her since morning. He gazed with vague foreboding down the street toward her home; then he left his horse standing, and went to see where she was.

There was no reply to his knock upon her door. The handle turned to his touch, and he went in and called her name. The silence was fearful. He feared something had happened to her, and in a kind of panic

he searched the house. He went to a room at the end of the hall upstairs, and opened the door. The old Señora Teresa was there, telling over her beads. She was so deaf she did not hear him. He shut the door and went away, strangely calmed.

## CHAPTER XXII

TRENT fancied that he saw a person moving on the moonlit desert, and he urged his horse forward, although he knew that he was, in all probability, following an illusion. Yet all at once the figure was nearer than he thought, and he saw that it was Yucca.

He reached her, and drew up his horse. "Where are you going?" he asked.

She turned, startled. "I am going to find the boys. I know where they are." She pointed toward the mountains. "They are there, near that cave halfway up the trail."

A shiver ran over him. She seemed like a desert spirit risen to show him the way. Her solemnity, her absolute confidence, impressed him, and her face, upturned to his, was angelic in its faith. He himself had given up all hope, but he would not cross her.

"Tell me, if you can, just where you mean, my darling," he said, "and I will ride on and look, if you will only go home and rest; but Lispenard and I searched there early this morning. I went nearly up to it, and called and called. Cozzens was explicit in his direction not to escape going there. Yet

he agreed with me that had they been so near, they would have been making their way home then. They would not perish of thirst in a single night."

"I know; but you did not find them. You did not go up far enough. This morning Mrs. Lispenard told me that she dreamed last night that the boys had gone away with a wolf," she told him.

"Yucca, this desert drives people mad, as the moonlight does sailors. Why do you talk of wolves?" he said. But his heart sank. What if he had been careless in his search? He wished now that he had gone up and looked into the cave.

"Don't you remember the night you and I sat out here in the desert?" she said, putting her hand on his bridle-rein to detain him; "and I pointed out Tiggy's wolf to you, which I had promised him to feed? It has been around here ever since. One afternoon I followed it to its cave, for it is quite tame—more like a dog than a wolf. Perhaps you remember that time Jim and Mr. Lispenard and you and I had our picnic in the mountain, the day we went up to the Aztec fort? And while we were at lunch I pointed out that we were sitting in the mouth of some animal's cave, because there were little bones about?"

"I went there only the other day," he answered. He had gone to visit that place where they had once been, and to recall how the indigo lizard had played about her white fingers, and her eyes had taken on the

colour of the lizard. "Is that where you want me to go?"

She did not take her hand from his rein.

"Aren't you going to let me go, my darling?" he asked.

She shook her golden head.

"Don't you want me to go?" he said. His heart beat heavily.

"Does this mean that you love me?" he ended humbly.

She let go the rein and put her hand up against his breast. It was such an appeal for comfort as a child might have made. He caught the little hand and kissed it with passionate tenderness; then he bent down and put his arm about her and kissed her mouth, and their lips clung together in longing.

She drew away. "Ride on," she cried, "and I will follow fast!"

"I will fire the three shots if I find them," he said. It was the signal set by Cozzens. He felt that it would be cruel to insist upon her returning home when she was so anxious. And, moreover, he was better content to have her follow, that he might be near if she needed him.

As he rode on he kept looking back, and saw her coming after. He saw her wave her hand, but soon her figure merged into the landscape, and he could not distinguish her from the cacti. But he had a sense of

great peace that she followed him, and, although he could no longer see her, he kept looking back. He had accepted the terrible fact that the boys could not possibly have survived, but he was too dazed from lack of sleep, and too weary, to feel anything very keenly. He kept thinking of what Lispenard said,—that he was always conscious of the eternities in the desert,—and he felt as if he and Yucca had met a moment since in the spirit rather than in the flesh. The world, real and substantial, as he had known it, had dissolved, and his opinions and resolutions had gone with it. He no longer thought of their marriage, nor of her going away with him.

He reached the base of the mountain, and left his horse standing while he ascended the familiar trail. Above him the moon poured her blue light down into that rocky chasm. He could see the porphyry-red of the mountains, the lichens yellow-grey. Terrible and desolate country, barren mountains upheaving from its breast, and voiceless underground rivers sinking to distant seas! As he climbed the ridge, the sense of being utterly alone weighed upon him. The warmth of her lips no longer lay upon his; humanity seemed never to have existed here. Yet once he had walked here in the sunlight with a girl whose eyes had been blue as the indigo lizard playing over her fingers! Now he wandered like a disembodied spirit. He called the names of the two boys again and again as

he neared the place where they had lunched that long-ago day, and the gigantic red walls roared the echo back at him. But suddenly a cry came mingling with the echo of his. It was like a miracle; the mountain rose strong and benign; the cold moonlight grew tender. The place had been a tomb. It was now become an asylum.

He saw a childish figure threading its way down over the loose stones and boulders in the path, almost slipping in its eager haste to reach him. It was Tiggy. "Here we are!" he cried.

Trent caught him up in his arms, in his delight.

"Where is Jim?"

"He's hurt his ankle, and can't come; but he heard you shouting," answered Tiggy. He had grown thin in those two days, and Trent could feel his little heart beating like a bird's with excitement. He set him down on his feet, and gave him a piece of bread out of the lunch he carried in his pocket. Tiggy ate it hungrily, but he did not wish anything to drink.

"We found water," he said.

"I want you to go back and tell Jim I will soon be there," said Trent; "but I must first go and fire off a signal to let them know you are found. If I fired here, I'm afraid the sound would be lost in the mountains."

Tiggy demurred. "You will lose us again! I will go with you."

"No; Jim will become anxious, and think something has happened to you. Run back," Trent insisted, and stood still a moment to watch him start.

Every few steps Tiggy paused to look around. "You will lose us again!" he shouted frantically. "Why don't you come with me?"

"Nonsense, run along," called Trent, feigning a sternness he did not feel, as he watched the little fellow plodding up.

The child's nerves were shaken beyond his control, and Trent's refusal was like desertion, and flung him into a panic. Once he sat down, but he got up when Trent called to him, and climbed on. This friend whom he had always believed so kind was a terrible tyrant. Why was he driving him back?

"He will lose us again," panted Tiggy; "he will lose us again."

A shout came echoing down the mountain. Jim was growing anxious.

"Hurry on, Tiggy," called Trent again. Then he descended to the base of the mountains, and fired three times. It was the signal agreed upon should the boys be found living.

The desert was still sleeping. There was yet no hint of dawn in the sky. He strained his eyes, but caught no glimpse of Yucca. She was as yet too far away.

Three distinct shots answered his. His signal had

been heard, and a little later that second signal was answered by one yet more distant. Lispenard must soon hear the good news.

The boys were found.

Now that that blessed fact was established, his mind turned from them to Yucca. As he ascended the trail again, he found himself talking aloud to her, as though she were there, murmuring her name. Endearments rushed to his lips. It was she who had saved the boys —his darling, with her belief in dreams and visions. Were-wolves! Trent laughed aloud.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came back the echo.

It was as though a Titan joined in his mirth, and the rocks further away reverberated faintly. The place he thought a tomb was become a refuge, and now it rang with laughter. He was light-headed from fatigue and loss of sleep. But he was sobered when he finally reached Jim, and realised anew that the boys were saved.

Jim sat leaning against the granite wall, his white face uplifted eagerly, his hand outstretched. "I thought someone would come," he said simply. His boyish bravado was gone. He seemed years older for the terrible experience he had undergone.

Trent himself was deeply moved as he wrung the boy's hand. "What's this Tiggy tells me about your ankle?"

"Oh, I've hurt it; nothing serious. Where's Coz-

zens?" Jim asked, scornful to make much of his wound.

"He's coming. Didn't you hear my signal? It was answered," replied Trent. "Let me look at your foot."

But Jim refused. "Cozzens 'll bind it up in a jiffy when he comes."

At last the dawn was breaking, and in the strange, vibrant light of coming day and vanishing moonlight he could see the boy plainly, splendid in the haggardness which brought out lines of strength and maturity in his face. He thanked God that this boy had been spared to Lispenard. He fed him and Tiggy bits of bread soaked in wine and water.

"I wish you'd give me another piece," said Jim. "I'll eat it slow. We're almost starved. I bet Cozzens put you up to giving me next to nothing. I've heard him talk."

"He warned me to look out for you, that you'd fight like a devil," Trent told him, and the boy laughed weakly. He looked as if he had been through a violent sickness. His face was white, his eyes inflamed, and he complained of a ringing in his ears. "It's the sand, I guess," he said; "I hope I won't be deaf."

Tiggy, fully calmed, put his hand on Trent's knee, and looked up into his face, smiling. "He's in there," he said, pointing to the cave.

"What does he mean?" Trent asked.

"Oh, he means the wolf," Jim answered.

Trent was not a particularly imaginative man, but a thrill ran over him. Was there some truth in all this talk of dreams? Had not Yucca told him that Mrs. Lispenard dreamt her children were with a wolf?

He was conscious that Tiggy was calling at the mouth of the cave, but he was as one paralysed himself, and could not move. The only horror of the supernatural he had ever experienced fastened him to the place with invisible chains. And as if he were dreaming, he heard Tiggy coaxing gently:

"Come, Lupus, Lupus. Come on out."

"I named him," said Jim in an aside. "It's Latin, you know. It's my joke on Tiggy. He doesn't know it means just wolf, and nothing else."

Trent stared helplessly at him. Were both the boys mad, or was he? He had never really credited the story of Tiggy's pet.

"Lupus, Lupus," said the little fellow.

A pointed face, grey as the dawn, was thrust out from the cave along the ground. The eyes were bright and cunning; the head had the lean fierceness of all desert things. And yet Trent could have sworn those ferocious eyes were almost roguish, and he found himself staring into them, fascinated, breathless. Thus a moment passed, and suddenly the head was raised, and a shaggy form went by him like a streak, and vanished.

"See," said Tiggy, holding up his finger; "Lupus has gone."

Trent took a swallow of the wine mixed with water, which he had brought for the boys. This night was proving too much for his nerves, and he felt that his own identity was at the vanishing point.

"We'd have been dead now, I guess, Mr. Trent, if it hadn't been for him," said Jim solemnly, still awed by the dangers they had encountered. "Did you see that cloud coming? It burst right over us. I thought we would choke to death."

"I didn't see Lupus, for Jim tied a handkerchief over my face," put in Tiggy; "but something kept pressing against me as if it were frightened, too, and I felt with my hands and caught his fur."

"I knew then we'd just got to stick to him," Jim continued. "Cozzens always told me if I were in trouble not to strike out for myself until I saw what the animals were going to do. But I guess he never thought we'd be following a wolf. Anyway, I'm pretty sure he's half dog."

"How did you manage to see him in all that blinding sand?" Trent asked, amazed.

"We didn't," said Jim, "but he stayed with us, yet always just ahead, leading."

"I kept my hand in the fur at his neck," added Tiggy.

"When we finally got here, we just lay down and

couldn't move, until Tiggy said he was thirsty. I knew what that meant." Jim paused, shuddering. "I knew water 'd got to be found. But once I got my bearings, I realised where we were, and that there was a water-pocket up the mountain a way, just off the trail. So I made Tiggy stay, and started out to find it."

"And while he was gone lots of animals went by after him, and a jack-rabbit came in, and Lupus pounced on him and ate him up," said Tiggy. "We ate the bones and crusts I brought out to feed the wolf with."

Belief in a deeper power than mere chance stirred in their listener. Surely a divine Providence had saved them from the simoon. A wolf had led them to this haven, where they had been safe all that day and night, while the terrible gale must have raged, hot as a furnace fire over and about them, but never quite touching them, save when it flung a handful of stinging sand in their faces. He thought of the animals which had skurried by them up the trail, seeking refuge, as in a greener country their kind fled the forest fires.

"How did you hurt your ankle?" he asked.

"I've broken it, I guess," Jim answered; "and the skin's all scraped, dragging it around. I fell trying to get the water, and my leg just doubled under me. I tell you, Mr. Trent, you realise what a wind can be

when it's strong enough to lift you off your feet and throw you down. It made me crazy-mad. I swore then I'd reach that water-pocket, and I got there, somehow."

"I was thirsty," said Tiggy placidly, leaning against their friend. He was so tired he could scarcely keep his eyes open, but he was content, and very proud of Jim.

The dawn was banishing the moonlight. Above their heads the sky seemed very distant, and a pale, chill blue.

Jim's voice dropped to a whisper, and the look which crept into his eyes told Trent that the boy had known blackest horror.

"Once Cozzens found a prospector lying below that water-pocket—dead of thirst; and his fingers were worn to the bone trying to get to it over the rocks. He had torn all his clothes off him, too. That's the way they do. I found a tin can there, and I drank all I could; and then I got in, for the water wasn't deep at that season of the year. Then I filled the can and started back. It took me a long time to get back, trying to keep the water from spilling, and having a sore ankle. I just crawled and slid, and the skin is all off my shoulders. We had an awful night. I wrapped my shoes in my wet coat, for the leather held moisture, and put it back in the cave. When the water in the can gave out we just sucked the leather in my shoes."

"Then in the morning I went up, for Jim was too sore to move," said Tiggy; "but I didn't fall."

"I will never trust him again," said Jim angrily. "I told him to take only ten swallows, and to come right back to me with the can. The wind had stopped blowing, and I knew he was safe enough. He came down acting queer, just like a drunk man. Why he didn't spill all the water, I don't know. After a while he lay down and went to sleep. And I slept, too, most of the morning. I was going to send him home for help, but I was afraid to. I couldn't seem to make him wake up. So I kept waiting and listening all day, thinking someone would come, until it got too late to start. Then I had to send Tiggy again for more water. But to-morrow morning I was going to manage to crawl down. I thought if the wolf could get along on three legs, I could with one and two arms."

He nodded solemnly. "You needn't have worried. I'd have found something to drink, somehow, even if I'd had to dig to water with my fingers, or I'd smashed a bull cactus with a stone and made Tiggy eat the pulp."

"Don't talk any more about it now, Jim," said Trent, seeing that the boy was becoming exhausted with excitement. "Let's think about getting you home." He felt that he could never forgive himself for not looking further up the trail the morning be-

fore, in the first part of his and Lispenard's search. He had shouted, but they must then have been asleep.

"I guess Cozzens 'll come pretty soon," said Jim. He hesitated a moment. "How's mamma taking it?"

"She'll be all right now," answered Trent cheerfully. "Now, Jim, I'm going to leave you for a while. I must meet Miss Armes. It was she who sent me. She was walking, while I had my horse and reached you first. I'm going to make you a bit more comfortable now." He took off his coat and folded it, and put it gently beneath the injured ankle.

"Oh, pshaw!" Jim protested; "you don't have to molly-coddle me. You'd better take Tiggy down with you. I don't mind being left, but send Yucca up to me as soon as she comes, won't you? And I guess I'll take something more to eat."

## CHAPTER XXIII

WHEN Trent, carrying Tiggy in his arms, reached the open desert at the foot of the mountain once more, the sky was warming, and the moon was a ghost of silver transparency in the blue. The air was so rarefied as to seem almost breathless. Happiness had steadied his nerves and cleared his mind. He no longer thought of himself and Yucca as disembodied souls in a desolate land, but knew he was waiting there for his sweetheart. She had been pale beneath his kiss in the moonlight a short time ago, pale, and worn with suffering. Now, like the flushing east, she would grow rosy with memory when she saw him. She might deny her love; she could not deny that kiss of their meeting spirits. He was too tender to be triumphant that she had succumbed, and he had a panic of anxiety lest he should not be able always to make the future smooth for her.

While he waited for her coming across the dim land, with its confusing cacti, Tiggy curled himself up on the sand near by, and fell asleep, with his head pillowed on his arm.

At last he saw her and went to meet her, and would have taken her to his heart had she not evaded him.

"I knew you would find them," she cried. Joy had, for the while, banished fatigue. Her face was like another moon in the dawning of day, white with a kind of transparency, her eyes full of shadowed light, and her hair blown about her head.

She went down on her knees beside Tiggy, and hung over him as a guardian angel might, it seemed to Trent.

"Where is Jim?" she asked.

"Jim fell and hurt his ankle. He is waiting for you. I'll take Tiggy home first, and then come back for him and you," he answered.

Tiggy did not waken. There was something infinitely touching to them both in his confident slumber. He was so small in that great desert, yet of such significance.

"How like his father he is," she said, looking up at Trent.

"He is a mysterious child to me," he answered. "I cannot tell you the strange shock it was when I found them. And the wolf was there, too, as you said."

"Oh, I never can forgive myself in not having thought of going there before, when I think of what it would have saved Mr. and Mrs. Lispenard. When she told me this morning that she dreamed her children were with a wolf, I was frightened, for I knew Tiggy had not told her of his friend. I kept thinking of it all day, and at last I started out. Then you

came——" She looked up at him shyly, and even in the white dawn he saw her rosy.

He gazed down upon her, thinking how sweet women were. They who won love were the first to capitulate. It was not in men to do so.

Had Lispenard's children died it would have been no reason to Trent why he should yield Yucca's point that he live in Sahuaro. He had experienced one moment of passionate impulse on the veranda the night before, when in the darkness he had reached out his arm for her, but this impulse would not have abided his sober later judgment. But he saw that for some indescribably sweet woman's reason their mutual terrible experience had been all-sufficient for her to give up her own will.

"When all seemed sorrowful, and we thought the children dead, did you kiss me at last, Yucca, knowing I needed comfort?" he asked.

"Yes," she said; "and I, too, wanted comfort." She rose from beside little Tiggy and put her arms around her lover and bowed her head, weeping on his breast. "It seemed to me I could not bear it if the boys died. I have known them ever since they were born, and I thought of poor Mr. and Mrs. Lispenard. I wished it had been I that was lost instead."

His heart stood still at the thought. "And what of me, Yucca, if anything had happened to you?" He had not thought her slender arms could have such

power to cling. He kissed her shining hair again and again; her face was hidden on his breast.

The mountains were between them and the east, but the sky above was a-shimmer with palest rose, and in the distant west were long streaks of green. The desert was shadowy and full of illusions. The small burrowing animals which dared to come out only at night were to be seen playing about their holes, as though loath to go under the dark earth. Ground owls fluttered along the sand; white-winged doves flew hither and thither, while in the tall cacti in which they nested the woodpeckers made a continual chatter. A jack-rabbit, with ears a-tremble and bright eyes, slipped through the grey brushwood. In the strange light Trent's horse, feeding near by, looked monstrous and queer.

"How silent it is!" he said in a hushed tone.

She raised her head, wondering. "Don't you hear the birds?"

"Yes; but, somehow, it only makes the real silence seem greater. Oh! my dearest, don't you see how awful it is, this silence of the desert? Come back to the East with me, Yucca; I cannot endure it here," he said.

She slipped away from him. "Mr. and Mrs. Lispenard are waiting while we delay."

"Don't leave me," he said huskily, putting out his hand. In a moment she would be gone. He would

lose her in this land of dawn and shadow. Then he saw that she was startled, and it sobered him. "I am light-headed from lack of sleep. I do not know what I am doing. Lispenard has heard the signal. He knows the children are safe now. Let me have a few minutes here with you."

But she would not come near him again. Did she wish to assume that all was as it had been before she took his bridle-rein and detained him, and raised her face to be kissed? Very well; he would fall in with her mood. He saw that she had already repented, that he must woo her again and again. Perhaps he would never quite gain her in this life, although he knew that she would marry him. But she would always be more maiden than wife, forever slipping from his embrace back to the dreams of her girlhood, but always his, always returning to him. And this truth of their relation appealed to the ideality deep beneath the grimness of his own nature. It swept him on beyond the bonds of earthly possession into their love eternal. Something of what was passing in his mind must have communicated itself to her, for she drew nearer him.

His solemn dreaming was gone. He caught her in his arms ardently. He would not kiss her again if she did not wish it, but, like a great, foolish boy, he put his cheek to hers.

"Someone is coming," she cried, blushing, strug-

gling; and he let her go, and turned to see a horseman a distance off.

"Poor Jim!" she added. "There he is waiting for me. Tiggy, dear, wake up." She bent down and shook him gently, and he sat up, rubbing his smarting eyes and smiling drowsily at her.

Trent whistled to his horse, and when the obedient animal came, lifted the little fellow on and then swung himself up behind him.

"Take care of yourself, my darling," he said anxiously; "be careful going up the trail. Some of the stones are loose. I will be back for you as soon as I can, and don't let Jim eat anything more. He has had enough. I think I gave Tiggy too much wine. He seems about half-seas over." He shook the reins, and glancing back saw that she lingered to see him go.

The horseman hurrying toward him proved to be the old mission priest on his burro. Until then Trent had not known that he had been indefatigable in the search.

He had heard the signal, and came hurrying to be of assistance. When he saw the actual living boy with Trent he gave a crooning sound and made the sign of the cross.

"Deo gratias," he murmured.

When Trent told him briefly how the wolf had saved the boys the priest was amazed.

"It is a miracle," he said. Yet he made the sign of the cross in the air.

"Why do you do that, Father?" asked Trent.

"It is both evil and good to be succored by a wolf. Some ill will happen. The devil mixes in the Lord's work. Where is his brother?"

Trent laughed at the superstition of the priest. "You will find the other boy up the Aztec trail. Miss Armes is with him. They will hear you if you call."

He rode on across the desert, to take Adele's little boy home to her. A multitude of thoughts crowded into his mind. He remembered how he and Adele had trembled toward each other in their first meeting after so many years, and he wondered at the past temptation, and was amazed that he had not foreseen from the first that he should love Yucca.

The searchers who had heard his signal were beginning to arrive, but he refused to be delayed longer, and told the eager riders the mother must have the child soon. So one by one they rode on to see Jim, after Trent's brief assurance that all was well, and his short explantion of the wolf. The Indian scouts were stolid, but the cowboys insisted on shaking Tiggy's hand, and every man of them fired three shots from his revolver, until his ammunition was exhausted, and the air of the wide, shadowy desert was startled, and wild animals fled frightened.

Before Trent were the outlying vegetable fields of

the Indian village, with their protecting hedges of upturned mesquite roots. He saw the doors of their adobe huts opening to the east, after the custom of their people, awaiting their Messiah. The blue smoke was rising from the hearths, and he noticed a squaw grinding corn between two flat stones.

He rode directly through the village, to gain time, and the Indian children ran after him to catch a glimpse of the boy in his arms.

He kept hearing the shots of the cowboys as they galloped toward the mountains, and it seemed like a bursting proclamation of joy.

Lispenard, too, heard those shots, near and far, and he felt as if each one struck to his heart with the repetition of a joy too great for him to bear. Adele, some hours since, had lain down and mercifully fallen asleep, and he sat beside her holding her hand. He shrank from waking her just yet, for he had no strength with which to meet her happiness. And it was well that she should rest. He had watched the glory of night pale into the grey of morning, and the roofs of the university buildings grow distinct against the dim horizon. He saw that the rosy light had crept past the zenith, and in the west were the cool greens he loved, and which he had never seen anywhere but on the desert.

It seemed long to him before Cozzens came in with Tiggy in his arms. Returning from his own fruitless

search, the mine owner had met Trent as he was entering the town. Trent followed him in now and shut and locked the door in the faces of those neighbours whose impulsive, kindly curiousity would have led them to pour into the house.

"Jim is all right," said Cozzens huskily; "hurt his leg, that's all. We'll soon have him here, too."

Tiggy clung resolutely to his long-deferred slumbers, and they put him on the lounge by his mother's side. She stirred, sighing in her sleep, and raised her arm. When she let it fall it lay across Tiggy.

Cozzens stepped softly across the room, and sat down and mopped his head with his handkerchief. His flannel shirt was open on his big chest, and his ruddy colour gone in the dust which covered him. He wished to go to Jim, yet he could not bring himself to leave Lispenard in these moments of mutual thanksgiving. His friendship with this man would always mean more than a woman's love to Cozzens. Love to him was always more or less a self-indulgence in women's flattery, which, in his better moods, he scorned. He was exhausted but content. The desert had been outwitted again. His eyes, bulging with fatigue, rolled in indulgent contempt from Lispenard to Trent. "You two was a pretty pair to send on that search," he drawled. "There, I told you to look particular up that trail, and you didn't because you thought it was too near home!"

## CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

Lispenard sat still. His strength was gone. But he listened with a smile of mingled humour and pride to Trent's brief recital of his sons' experience. The story of the wolf's veritable existence was amazing to him.

"They should found a city, after such an adventure, as Romulus and Remus did," he commented.

His smile passed into a frown of pain. He felt one of his terrible heart attacks coming on. He who had once been so indifferent a father now felt that the joy of his children's recovery would kill him. His lips moved dumbly, and he put out his hand to Trent, who was nearest him. But Cozzens was at his side first, and had him at the open window in a minute, with brandy at his lips.

"I guess I aint nursed this family all these years for nothing," said the big frontiersman grimly.

Lispenard stood leaning against him, deathly white, his lips blue. His soul sought to retain possession of its frail earthly tenure, and finally life all-glorious came back to him.

The first sun rays struck the university buildings, and his poor, strained heart warmed to the ideals for which they stood. Above all, must those doors of learning send forth men, rather than scholars—men like Cozzens, like Trent.

The world should learn to what a race the beautiful desert could give birth!

He turned to his friend with the smile which made

Cozzens worship him. "My dear fellow," he said faintly, "we must keep the spirit fresh in the hearts of our young men. They must love the adventure of life."

His hand tightened on Cozzens's sleeve, and he swayed.

Lispenard had gone to seek that fuller adventure of the spirit in whose existence he so fondly believed.

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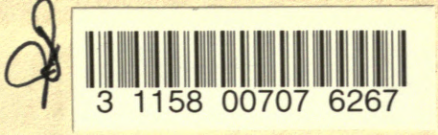
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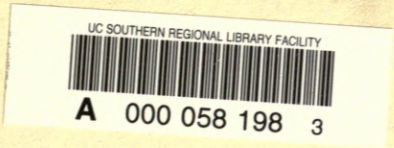
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